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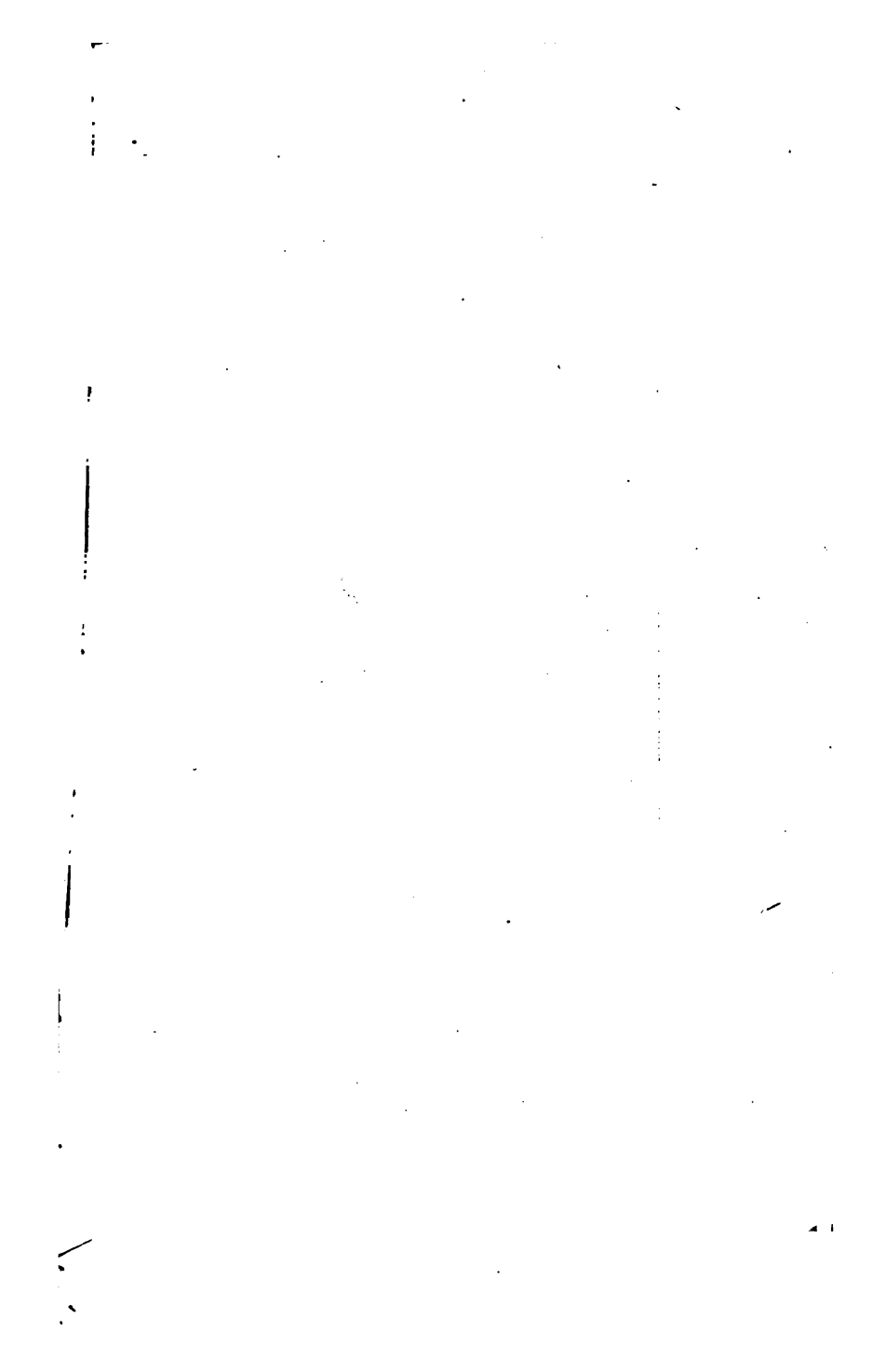
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A WAVE ON THE BRETON COAST

BY

BLANCHE WILLIS HOWARD ^{von Teuffel}

AUTHOR OF "AUNT SERENA," "ONE SUMMER," ETC.



BOSTON
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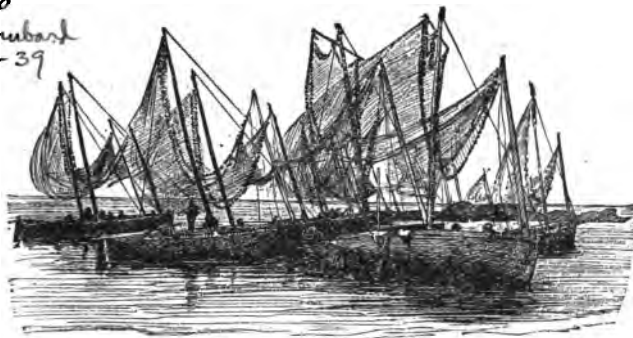
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G U E N N.

CHAPTER I.



ATE one September afternoon a small red and yellow omnibus drew up noisily and discharged its passengers before the Hôtel des Voyageurs, in the Breton village of Plouvenec. From the nearest railway-station to this region of ignorance, superstition, and picturesque beauty, endless white roads

stretched away between *fossés*—or embankments of granite and turf—six feet high, luxuriantly overgrown with moss and vines, and crowned by the great mutilated oak-trunks which distinctively mark the Breton landscape.

During a drive of four hours the box-like vehicle had mercilessly shaken its contents together; and Mr. Everett Hamor had felt that there might be a certain difficulty in finally extricating himself from the vivid samples of the commercial-traveller, with whose elbows, knees, high-colored neckties, and valises he was frequently in confusing juxtaposition. Arriving, he was relieved to find that he could still verify his identity. Stretching his long, cramped legs with satisfaction, he stood a moment at his ease and looked about him.

The village fathers were sitting at little tables in front of the café of the Voyageurs, regaling themselves with absinthe, vermouth, and stale politics. In Plouvenec, beside dram-shops of startling frequency, there were two cafés of distinction. Certain prominent personages left one, only to walk across the common to the other. There was a tide in the affairs of the cafés,—each day a regularly recurring ebb and flow of popularity. Ebb-tide at the Voyageurs meant high-tide at the Grand, and *vice versa*. It was flood-tide at the Voyageurs when Hamor arrived.

“Another fool of a painter down from Paris,” was the tacit comment of the Plouvenec worthies, as he secured his traps, and, with a quick glance up and down the convivial tables and in the café windows, passed on to meet madame standing in the doorway. Madame was then and there a woman much to Hamor’s taste, and time but confirmed his impression of her estimable qualities; while she, for her part, never ceased to regard the young man with the calm smile of approval which she was now bestowing upon him, as they interchanged ideas in respect to rooms.

Madame had the air of a Roman matron in a Bretonne coiffe. Five feet and eight inches in height, of

massive proportions, impressively handsome, and strong enough to throw a too noisy inebriate out of the window without shortening her breath or heightening her color, she was one of the happy few whom destiny adapts to their surroundings.

No one had ever seen or desired to see her angry. Madame's personality was too potent in its calm for a wise man to care to brave its storm. She had singularly wide-open brown eyes, whose soft unswerving gaze, turned broadly upon the village Falstaff and his recruits, caused panic in their ranks, and disorderly retreat. Beneath the edge of her white coiffe, smooth bands of dark hair lay close on her imperturbable forehead. Placidity and power were expressed in all her movements. In short, madame was a newly discovered Fate, whom to defy were madness. There was a monsieur, a large and plethoric man, rarely seen. It was not known for what purpose he was employed in madame's ménage. There were also seven children, in a more or less thriving condition, never known to visibly occupy their mamma's attention. She was supposed to provide for them according to some vast and inscrutable method. No weakness of the ordinary mother, solicitous about mending Jack's manners and socks, could be imputed to her.

Madame and Hamor were then mutually gratified. She classified him as a handsome and amiable young fellow, who would give little trouble and in all probability pay his bills. He saw before him a comely woman of superior nerve, who would care for his creature-comforts, and never come to him weeping and demanding sympathy — as the rustic landlady, according to his experience, was prone to do in hot and crowded seasons. He disliked demands upon his sympathy.

Whether because he possessed too large or too small a supply, he had never asked himself.

From her finely intelligent replies, he learned that his friends were at work at some distance from the village. Having lunched to his satisfaction, he lighted a cigarette and sauntered out.

Before him was an open square, hard with the tread of many sabots. Near the inn stood a couple of oaks. Beyond, no trees, no shrub or turf, relieved the barrenness of the expanse of earth, which bore the resounding name, la Place Nationale, — otherwise the village common, where markets, menageries, gavottes, games and wrestling matches, wax-figures, Robert Macaires, and every species of public entertainment known to Plouvenec, were wont to appear. Directly across the common was a gleam of water, from which rose low crenellated walls of granite, flanked by towers and broad ramparts. Over the battlements was a glimpse of tree-tops and steep roofs, clustering around one church-spire.

Plouvenec, the ancient town, with its one irregular street of crowded houses, stood on an island encircled by a broad arm of the sea, and connected with the modern village only by a drawbridge. The fortress was quaint, ugly, and suggestive. It knew more than five centuries of history, and the doughty deeds of the many wars which during that time convulsed Brittany. Du Guesclin, De Rohan, and many gallant soldiers had besieged and occupied it, and enriched its memories. Old tales, less creditable to its reputation, relate grimly that, as early as the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, thieves, cut-throats, and any gentleman who had murdered his friend or committed some other base and unpardonable crime, sought refuge among the notorious

rascals sheltered behind the stout walls of Plouvenec. Like many another old sinner, it now wore, in spite of its scandalous past, an air of sullen and forbidding morality. Its sunrise gun, its bugle-call, — its score of soldiers, in baggy scarlet trousers, marching under the portcullis and over the drawbridge, to perform somewhat languid evolutions on the common, — seemed a tribute to what had been, rather than discipline demanded by any present or anticipated need. Rumors of war were far remote from the dull little island citadel. Its grass-grown ramparts commanded broad and peaceful waters, furrowed only by the fishing-boats of the village.

Hamor passed slowly down the long village street. On one side was a row of small white houses with steep gables. On the other, boats were crowded along the quay, with fishing-nets hanging to dry on the masts, and waving slightly with a shadowy effect.

The street was very quiet. An old woman in sabots hobbled by. A group of dirty and pretty little girls, each with a knitting-needle over her right ear for safe-keeping, or run through the top of her coiffe, sat on the ground playing jackstones. Small cabins stood in a line along the quay farther down. A sharp salt smell filled the air, and the incoming tide was impatiently washing the mighty foundations of the granite digue. The street rounded a point, and ran into a long road by the bay.

Here people were standing waiting, while hundreds of fishing-boats, bringing food and work and traffic, were coming in. It was the life of Plouvenec drawing near. Over the broad bay the boats came floating like a flock of great, slow birds. The low light caught their dusky red sails, and warmed them to a deeper significance. The sun hung far down in the western sky, and sent one-broad golden shaft straight along the

surface of the water, to lose itself in rich masses of shining yellow seaweed, that covered the great rocks at Hamor's feet. The sky was gray, and tranquil and tender. Faint rosy clouds drifted together over a dark promontory in the distance, and fluttered about a bold procession of pines on a hill near by, — their stems all leaning landward, as if marching hurriedly away from the pursuing sea. Far away to the west the long land-line was strongly blue.

On the low wall between the road and the beach perched groups of women, knitting, chattering, making bold jokes, telling scandalous stories, laughing noisily. They were fisher-girls, employed in the sardine packing-houses across the way. Hamor, also seated on the wall, listened to them half unconsciously, — viewed them as a part of the landscape. Their caps were luminous bits of white. Their faded colors were charming against the gray stone. So much he perceived, merely as he saw the empty packing-houses, — with long low rooms, where soon the chattering women would be at work, — the advancing waves break on the beach, the pale clouds hovering over the hill, the long road curving towards shining sands; and, as far as the eye could reach, the sardine-boats, a long perspective of slowly advancing luggers, all heading towards the quay, all running in with lazy sail on a wind from the sea, — a wind that came from beyond the Lannions, the group of barren islands far away, whose line was barely perceptible on the horizon, and whose brave light, even as Hamor looked, flashed into existence, and flung its cheery greeting to the sailor-world.

The young painter was moved to mild retrospection. He remembered certain pretty girls he had known, lightly yet not unkindly doubting whether they were

quite as charming as they had seemed. He recalled a solitary mountain-peak, whose noble shape and snowy summit he had watched mornings and evenings during a long season of rough California life. It did not occur to him to doubt the transcendent loveliness of Mount Shasta. Hamor worshipped Nature. He had never worshipped a woman.

Rising, he walked slowly on, — smoking still, glancing critically at the knots of women. As he passed, some made remarks in Breton and giggled obtrusively, some stared at him stolidly, — others with evident dislike, or coarse admiration. They were fisher-folk, — wives, sisters, and daughters of rough men, who worked hard at sea and drank hard on land. Many, it may be the most of them, were innocent in life or thought; but hardly one could be quite ignorant of vice. Impure influences hovered round their very cradles. Drunkenness, brutality, vile language, wife-beating, brawls, and murderous assaults were as familiar to their earliest years, as its mother's face and sweet lullaby to a happy child. They knew only this life which surrounded them, and habit had made them indifferent to scenes that ought to chill a young girl's blood with horror. But a little distance from the village, and peasant-women, on broad farms, were dutiful, innocent, gentle, as the ideal country maiden need be. Here in turbulent Plouvenec, fate had exposed girls to evil with as much assiduity as she guards others from it. They had never had the chance to be what we call respectable. Yet among these coarse women and girls waiting on the wall, while the red-sailed boats came steadily on over the sunset-lighted bay, there were faces as pure and proud as the face of a young duchess, eyes that were bold yet honest and fresh; there were the beautiful curves and free vigorous

limbs of youth and perfect health ; while the sun and wind and weather, which browned and roughened their cheeks, had faded their kerchiefs, once of glaring colors, down to a gentle and harmonious indistinctness ; and they all wore their simple and beautiful coiffe, which softens heavy peasant-features marked by toil and time, refines the coarse, and lends an indefinable charm of delicacy and tenderness to a fresh young face.

Hamor, as he regarded them, was moved by the pure enthusiasm of the artist. No psychological problems occupied him, no benevolent probings into their sufferings, experiences, and possibilities. He was simply and greatly pleased with their colors and contours ; and his handsome young face expressed vivid æsthetic satisfaction, which the uninitiated might easily construe as personal, rather than objective and elevated. The women saw the look in his eyes, and, woman-like, misinterpreted it. They became aware of this friendly young gentleman's approval, and their laughter and movements betrayed a certain consciousness of his presence. In rude play, a close circle was formed concealing one of their number from his view. They looked at him over their shoulders in high glee. Suddenly, as if by military command, the circle broke. The women, with shrieks of coarse laughter, scattered to the right and left. A small, black-cloth object flew through the air and dropped near him ; when Hamor perceived directly before him, alone and abandoned, a little figure, with a heavy mane of long brown hair, falling on either side of the fiercest eyes it had ever been his lot to see in a girl's face. Transfixed with confusion and rage, she glared at the unoffending stranger as if he were the exclusive author of her woes.

“ By Jove, what a model ! ” and Hamor stopped

short. She was scarcely seventeen. A broad kerchief, of softly blending reds, was folded over her pretty shoulders and down to her slender waist. Her short woollen skirts hung in dark folds, which defined her shape with the unreserve of intimate acquaintance, as long-worn, much-patched garments are apt to do; and she stood in her little sabots, with a bold grace only possible to a girl who, consciously or unconsciously, has never studied the proprieties. One small rough hand clutched her coiffe. The other was raised to her head, while from under her lifted elbow she scowled at Hamor; and all her brown, shining hair, down to its gleaming, russet ends, hung loose before the strange man.

He stooped and mechanically picked up the black skull-cap lying at his feet, inspecting it seriously. At this the women shrieked anew, and doubled themselves up in uncouth mirth.

"This is yours?" he said, approaching the girl, and now observing other caps upon the grass near her. He looked at her kindly. It was his way with children, and she seemed like a child to him. In his expression, as he held the cap towards her, was the quiet scrutiny of the artist and the habitual courtesy of a well-bred man. She did not know what courtesy meant. It was extraneous to the Plouvenec fish-wife sphere. She thought that he was mocking her. Snatching the cap rudely from his hand, her angry blue eyes flung at him their parting message of hate and defiance.

"You, — you mind your own business!" she said passionately, in rapid, indistinct Breton-French; and, with one swift motion, sprang towards the women who had played her false, upbraiding them, now that she had found her tongue, in no measured terms. Her com-

panions, pleased with the delicate humor and success of their practical joke, were apparently willing enough now to form themselves into a dressing-room for the convenience of the dishevelled little maid, who, with all her great rage and small caps, disappeared from Hamor's view. Within the stalwart circle the angry child was pouring forth volleys of invective and reproach in her native Breton tongue, which, though verbally unintelligible to Hamor, could not fail to impress him as singularly adapted to the expression of ungovernable rage. Amused and curious, he was disposed to stay and watch her complete her toilette, which had for him the interest of any other unsolved problem.

There was, to the inexperienced eyes of the young man, an attractive incompatibility between the diminutive head-gear and the amount of hair to be secreted within it. The multiplicity of caps also bewildered him. But feeling somewhat out of place, and having no desire to prolong her agitation, he went tranquilly on.

"That girl must pose for me. She is a nice little thing. She's amusing," he concluded. Leaving the quarrelling fish-women far behind, he followed the road along the curving shore until he reached a dusky beach, where his tread sank noiselessly in the sand, the waves broke with a soft splash, and the subtle evening was creeping over land and sea.

Unconscious of distance, he walked on until a towering pile of crags suggested itself with sombre eloquence in the twilight as a fitting terminus to his wanderings. He turned and went inland. Broad meadows, tufted with heather, mullein, and brake, succeeded to the dunes. Narrow stony paths led him along fields and intimately between giant hay-stacks, and past the very threshold of some isolated cottage—where the day's toil was

already merging into heavy rest, and only the dusky figure of a belated peasant, and his mechanical greeting, *Deves mat dor'ch*, introduced brief life and movement into the stillness. The village lights shone feebly far away. Long roads between high, granite garden-walls, over which the foliage leaned in dense shapes, led down towards the village-centre.

He returned to the hotel. Here, except for the approach of evening, the only perceptible change was that the men, who had been drinking vermouth and absinthe at the door, were now drinking absinthe and vermouth in the café.

Madame met him in the corridor, with her discriminating smile. It was not a broadly defined, unreserved smile, but slow and sphinx-like. She smiled to herself, not at you.

"Monsieur's friends are not yet come. They do not expect monsieur to-day, probably."

"You do not know if Mr. Staunton received my dispatch last night?"

"There is one here for him," she answered encouragingly; "but it was not delivered until after he was gone this morning."

Hamor smiled.

"Madame the postmistress is very clever and amiable," announced the landlady.

Hamor politely remarked that he had no reason to doubt it.

"But perhaps a little distraite," she continued gently.

"Ah?"

"It is therefore well when messieurs les artistes give themselves the trouble to beg her to concentrate herself."

Madame was standing now in a doorway, and seemed to support her whole domicil.

"Superb caryatid!" thought Hamor.

"And is your postmistress apt to be distraite with letters too?" he asked good-humoredly.

"There are moments when it is possible for her to be distraite with letters also," madame admitted, her broad, unconscious gaze turned full upon the young man. "Clever people are often distraits," she added mildly. Then: "But monsieur without doubt has been to see the fish? No? They have had a good catch. The strangers find it interesting. Monsieur would do well to take a turn down the quay."

Confident that this admirable woman would recommend nothing insignificant to his notice, he thanked her, and went cheerfully out.

The deserted street along the quay, where he had strolled not many hours before, was now teeming with life. It was the Fish-corner of Plouvenec — as supreme in power and interest to the village, as is the Exchange of a great city to its speculators and capitalists. The boats were mostly in; some, still arriving, met, as soon as they neared the shore, with calls, inquiries, and proposals. People were hurrying to and fro with long flat baskets of sardines. Women knelt recounting fish, flinging, for every ten in one basket, one as tally into another. The buyers' cabins were lighted, and instinct with the spirit of traffic. Beside fishermen, buyers and sellers of sardines, men and women employed in the usines, was an outer circle of lookers-on. The judge of the peace — short, burly and plausible, concealing a small nature behind a large smile — had come down from the café. A brace of influential burghers — whose monarchical principles, dormant mornings, swelled and grew blatant every

evening after invigorating baths of absinthe — accompanied him. The judge, peasant-born and self-educated, had gained by his own solid exertion his comfortable niche in the world's municipal wall, and regarded himself as indispensable to the safety of the French Republic. His patriotism however was tempered with love of popularity, and he never expressed himself too decidedly in the presence of his Royalist boon-companions. He found consolation in the reflection that the Republic seemed as yet placidly unaware that Plouvenec was battering at its outposts, and that his friends' weapons grew rustier as the years rolled by. His conception of the duties of his office led him always to decide in favor of both contesting parties, or of neither of them. This original method of dispensing justice he practised with much ingenuity. In the case of angry peasants it was eminently successful; as, however much they might pommel each other, they were never inclined to pommel the judge, but were deeply impressed with his equity and wisdom. He was thus enabled to retain the good-will and respect of a somewhat turbulent neighborhood. When he saw two men fighting, he usually moved gently off in an opposite direction. The chief of the police, a slight young man with a mild face and no uniform, had also strolled down to the Fish-corner, and two of the ubiquitous gendarme-species — as usual in country-places, oblivious of their surroundings — stood obstructively about.

Hamor saw too, and quickly lost sight of, some young men whose brown velveteens and expression of animated, pleased inquiry proclaimed them painters. He also observed an elderly tourist who, having inadvertently found himself among vulgar people, was hurrying away, with an air of discomfort and reproach upon his respectable features.

Young coiffed girls, linked together in long twining rows, as is girl-fashion wherever girls grow, and gamins, darting about with shrill street-songs and coarse street-wit, completed the scene.

Now, fleeting single impressions fascinated Hamor ; now, it was the effect of the whole which interested him profoundly. Continually changing,—increasing, decreasing, and swaying,—inconstant, imperious, charged with excitement, hoarse voices rising in angry crescendo,—the mob seemed like one huge, fierce, multiform, protean, living thing.

The row of high gabled houses held aloft dim lanterns, which cast sickly yellow beams upon the faces beneath. Through the glass door of a drink-shop came an orange glow, and the muffled sounds of interior life. Phantom-like ships lay along the quay in intense shadow. The ancient citadel slumbered upon its island. Over the black waters, on the other shore, were long, still reaches, where weary peasants slept among their fossés ; and ancient Druid stones raised themselves sternly under silent heavens. Beyond the digue throbbed the ocean, in the mystery of night and distance.

The black mass of human life surged and swayed. An angry woman rose from among the kneeling fishwives. Cursing and heaping invective upon a neighbor, her figure dark for a moment against the white houses and the lights, she fell back into her place. Two men, quarrelling about the counting, grappled with each other and disappeared, rolling over in the shadow. The buying and selling and counting went steadily on ; and, above the rough cries, Hamor heard the young girls' high voices chanting a hymn to Our Lady of the Sea.

A violent push, followed by an opening in the crowd near him, seemed to suddenly transform him from a mere

spectator into a constituent. Two fighting men emerged from the general indistinctness into ugly prominence. The bystanders accorded them respectful attention, from which Hamor inferred that they were well-known characters, — it might be, possessed of chronic combativeness, like two rival watch-dogs in a small neighborhood. One was a short, thick-set sailor, between forty and fifty, whose open jersey displayed his powerful throat and chest. As he turned awkwardly, now towards, now from the light, cursing in drunken fury, his stupid fist occasionally hitting his man, oftener plunging aimlessly about, Hamor thought he had never seen a more vicious-looking brute. The other was younger, taller, and less strong, but held his own tolerably well. Both were very drunk, and neither knew how to fight.

Hamor watched them with extreme disgust, and a desire to interfere which he found difficult to restrain. As long as they were content with an unskilful belaboring of each other's persons with the natural weapon, the fist, he stood by, passive. When, however, the short man, by an evil inspiration, kicked his opponent, threw him flat, and began trampling upon him with his sabots, he found himself promptly seized from behind and drawn off, his elbows pinioned in an uncompromising grip, in spite of his fierce struggles. Meanwhile the prostrate man was again on his feet, demanding his enemy. Finding him now an easy prey, he struck him full in the face.

"Let him alone, you coward!" exclaimed Hamor, his own mettle well roused.

"Keep this fellow back, some of you, can't you?" he tried to the unresponsive crowd. Then, to the struggling man: "I will let you go when you are quiet, not before—do you hear?" Observing a dangerous look in

the eyes of the attacking party, and an uplifted arm, he swung his prisoner round to save him from the blow. Powerless himself to parry, he moved as best he could to avoid it, and the next instant found himself unharmed and untouched. He turned, and perceived, with a feeling of strong surprise, the all-sufficient cause of the cessation of hostilities. A tall dark man, in a priest's cassock, was restraining the sailor, not by sacerdotal authority, but by the strength of his excellent biceps. Hamor involuntarily released his prisoner.

"Hoël," said the young priest, "you know it's no use. I am stronger than you. When I let you free, you are to go home. You are not to speak to any one on the road. If you speak you will fight. Come, come!" — and throwing his arm round the man's shoulders; still guarding him well, talking always, soothing him, he marched him through the crowd, pointed him in the right direction, and sent him off towards home.

"Remember, — no talking by the way!" Hoël walked a few steps, stopped, and burst into maudlin tears. "I haven't anything against Rodellec. He's my friend. You're my friend. We are all friends, monsieur le recteur, all good Bretons. But when Rodellec says —"

"Never mind Rodellec. You may tell me about him another day. You go home now, and try to keep quiet. I will see to Rodellec. Trust me for that," said the curé grimly.

Presently Hamor saw the dark face and broad shoulders of the priest returning, and observed in his walk a curious sailor-swing.

Hamor's sailor in the meantime stood sullenly considering the feasibility of attacking the stranger. The tall priest, looking neither to the right nor left, bore straight down upon his countryman.

"Rodellec, go home!" he said, not ungently, but with a distinct tone of command. You've caught enough fish, and had enough drink and fighting. Go home now, and sleep it off." The light from the nearest lantern shone on his grave and striking face.

Rodellec, with profuse oaths, demurred. He would break Hoël's head first, and he would break anybody's head who tried to stop him. Scowling, and supported on the arms of his friends, he was edging along towards Hamor.

"I shall not fight you," said the young man coldly. "I have no quarrel with you, you know. But whenever I see you stamping on a man's face with your sabots, I shall stop it if I can."

"Damn you!" said Rodellec, advancing.

But the priest, who had been intently watching each speaker's face, now stepped forward and stood beside Hamor.

"Go home, I tell you Hervé!" His voice was stern and imperious. He towered above the sailors, — his head thrown back, a flash of honest anger in his eyes. "Shame, Rodellec! and shame on the rest of you men, that you urge him on. Stand back, I say. You must be drunk, indeed, if you let me speak twice. What — you, Alain? You, Jean? And Michel, too? Back, all of you! Back, Loïc!"

The men drew back abashed; only Rodellec held his ground, snarling viciously.

"Do you dare to refuse me?"

Rodellec evidently dared to refuse anybody. He was measuring the two men with his eyes, painfully speculating upon his chances of success, in case he should attack the Church Militant. "Man fights a priest; priest fights a man," he muttered sullenly.

"Bad for man. Saints and angels stand by priest; devil stands by man! Odds against me — and the stranger clutches like a fiend."

The two young men exchanged an involuntary smile. Then the priest said more kindly: "Priests don't fight, Rodellec, as you know when you are sober. They keep others from fighting — if they are strong enough; and happily they are sometimes," he added, drawing up his powerful figure. "Go, Hervé. You'd better go now, you see."

Growling a parting round of blasphemies and maledictions, Rodellec snatched his *béret* from a friend's hand, and stumbled off.

A light little figure pressed quickly through the crowd and followed him. Hamor recognized the girl he had seen on the shore, with the loose hair. He knew her by her eyes. Now all the shining hair was out of sight, and the demure white *coiffe*, with its pure oval, framed the young face. She met his glance with a hard, bold stare, but when she greeted the priest a warm smile broke over her defiant eyes and set mouth.

"Bon soir, monsieur le recteur," she said modestly, making her little *révérence*, and was gone. Hamor turned to his neighbor. He was looking gravely after the girl. From the shadow a grotesque hump-backed figure leaped after her, with a whoop. Now they were lost in the darkness. Now the light from a lantern on the next house fell upon them, — the two children hand in hand, the girl walking stolidly beside her father, who was gesticulating and apparently swearing at her.

"Monsieur le curé," began Hamor cordially, his hand outstretched, "at last I have the opportunity to thank you — and —"

"It was nothing, nothing at all," returned the priest

abruptly, looking as if he would like to save himself as soon as possible. His air of authority was gone. Here was merely a simple country curé, eying the foreigner with ill-concealed suspicion and race-prejudice. "It was nothing, I assure you, monsieur," he repeated uneasily.

"I admit it was not much," said Hamor gravely; "but let us be just, — it was my head." His manner was easy and winning.

"Ah, monsieur! —"

"And great was my relief when I found it was all there, and saw so important an ally — my defences being occupied at the moment."

The priest smiled.

"Monsieur also did very well," he said simply. "Rodellec is strong. — Monsieur is a stranger, I perceive. An Englishman, perhaps?"

"An English-speaking person, but not an Englishman; I am an American. However, that is all the same thing to you, I presume."

"On the contrary, I am much interested in your America," returned the curé. "I have read the history of your war. Is monsieur from North or South America?" he inquired courteously.

Aware of the utter futility of any attempt to rectify this error, which, with all its grand geographical vagueness, he had heard a dozen times before in France, Hamor replied that he was from the North; briefly adding that he was an artist, had studied several years in Paris, and had arrived only that day in Plouvenec.

"Then I regret that you have met with precisely this welcome." The curé was no longer abrupt and embarrassed. He was speaking now with a fine simplicity. His dark face was singularly brilliant. His height and

carriage made him a most striking figure. "They are not bad fellows—our sailors—when they are not drunk."

"But they are usually drunk, are they not?" Hamor ventured to say.

"Well yes, too often, — always, after a heavy catch," was the frank reply.

"This is a most curious, interesting scene here to-night."

"You find it so, monsieur?" said the priest, with animation. "I—I love it; but I am a Breton; you could not be expected to see it as I do!"

"And yet it may be that our impressions of it do not differ much," replied Hamor, intent upon studying the priest's face, and talking quite at random.

"Impressions?" The curé frowned slightly. "I have no impressions. I am in it—of it. I am of the people, monsieur. It is the pulse of the people beating here, — I feel it."

"And I?" Hamor asked, with a smile, — "I am sure I feel it too."

"Ah — you feel the pulse like a doctor, monsieur, and count it cleverly, it may be. I — beat with it!"

"But," said Hamor, with good-humored expostulation, "you can't expect me to beat with it all at once. If I do not beat, I've been at least almost beaten."

"You are right, monsieur. It is perfectly natural that strangers should regard it as a spectacle. Ah, I forget that too often!" Then smiling, and with what Hamor thought the most charming manner in the world: "I am not much used to strangers. I am apt to be impatient of strangers. And the truth is, monsieur, we Bretons are a stubborn, prejudiced race."

"Well, so are we," returned Hamor, laughing a

little. "In fact, I have yet to discover the race that is not. I was about to ask you, monsieur le curé, how many fish they have caught to-day."

"Fifteen thousand to a boat—the largest catch of the season."

"Ah! then a little elation is pardonable. And you called the man—my man—Rodellec, I believe."

"Yes, monsieur, — Hervé Rodellec."

"And the young girl with him? Is she his daughter?"

The curé turned away from the light. "That was Guenn," he said slowly, — "Guenn Rodellec."

"A most remarkable-looking girl, — a beautiful girl," Hamor rejoined with emphasis.

There was a slight pause. "Monsieur will pardon me," the curé began hurriedly. "The people seem to be scattering. There are some men I must see. I have the honor to wish monsieur a very good-evening —"

"Oh, don't let me detain you," Hamor returned cordially; "but may I not say au revoir? You will allow me to call and pay my respects? I shall not forget what you have done for me. And although I am a stranger," — he laughed pleasantly, — "I am going to be a regular Breton before long."

"Monsieur is too amiable," and the priest gave a deprecating gesture. Then, since it was a question of hospitality: "It would give me pleasure to see you. But I do not live in Plouvenec. Monsieur will have the trouble of finding me on my islands. Permit me" — extending his card. Making kind yet somewhat formal adieux, he walked rapidly away, with his sailor-gait and his long, swinging soutane.

Hamor held the card up to the first available light, and read: —

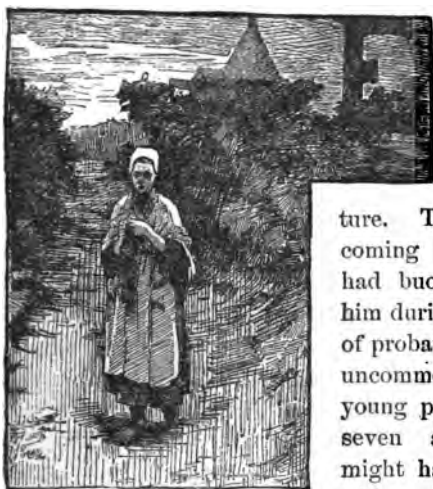
THYMERT

Recteur des Lannions.

“Thymert, Recteur of the Lannions, — whatever they may be, — you’re the type I’ve been looking for. *Monsieur, I am of the people!* Magnificent pose, and the pride of a cardinal.” With a well-pleased smile he walked back to the inn. He believed in his star.



CHAPTER II.



VERETT HAMOR'S dominant mental quality was unbounded faith in his own fu-

ture. The conviction of coming greatness, which had buoyantly sustained him during a long period of probation, — not being uncommon to ambitious young painters of six or seven and twenty, — might have been regarded by sober maturity with

the pitying indulgence it is apt to accord to the vast dreams of youth, had not his devotion to his art, and his stern power of molating upon its altar all things liable to distract his worship, seemed to impart to his aspirations a certain clear tone of prophecy. He had been heard to make the savage assertion that to reach his goal he would not hesitate to walk over the bodies of babes and virgins. Now no man could be more uniformly gentle than he to these tender classes

of beings, and it is open to doubt whether he would have been practically able to take so inhuman a promenade, even to gain the height where Titian stands. Life had as yet demanded of him no fatal sacrifice. It had however led him by somewhat devious paths to his present position.

His childhood was that of a New England boy, who lives in a classic old town, of whose early history and honorable tradition his family has always been a distinguished element. The influences of such a sheltered home reach tenaciously into one's farthest future.

When he went to college he was somewhat delicate physically, sensitive, timid, and unusually ignorant of life. He had been reared exclusively by gentle, conscientious, and clever women. With his first plunge into the world, he met with various rude shocks, some of which harmed him, while some proved of incalculable benefit. It is to be regretted that no honest biographer can attribute to Hamor's four years' college course the honor of eminent scholarship, much less the virtue of unwearying diligence. His ability was unquestioned. He might have distinguished himself in many branches, but, the truth is, he excelled in none. It may be that he lacked ambition as a student; possibly he and the aristocratic young men of his acquaintance considered it better tone to be merry than to be wise, and it is certain that he devoted too much time to the painting of huge pictures for boat-clubs and class-day surprises.

This kind of work was however merely for his own passing pleasure. He thought of becoming a painter had not yet taken possession of him.

Afterwards it seemed incredible that he had wasted so many years, ignorant of what was awaiting him. But his early vague desires were half crushed by the

weight of family tradition. The men of his race had been grave scholarly gentlemen, living among their books. There had never been a painter among them,—“or an organ-grinder, thank God!” the true Puritan spirit might have added in one breath. Not that in a town of acknowledged literary tendencies, prestige, and rich tradition one had no interest in the Old Masters, and no good engravings on one’s walls. But the Old Masters were, after all, foreigners. There had never been any in New England. No doubt there were excellent people in Japan; but who could expect of them the less oblique eyes or the probity of old Puritan stock? So too with gypsies, actors, and painters. Art, defined in a general way, was something itinerant if not dissolute. An artist—a pedler, indeed—could have amiable qualities, but should hardly be trusted with one’s daughter or one’s spoons. Did not a boy often cherish wild longings to join a circus, to run away to sea, to be an artist,—heaven knows what? But properly managed, he would outgrow his vagaries, and become a respectable man,—not differing essentially from people around him.

The opposition to Hamor’s strong but sleeping artistic tendency was as powerful as it was subtle. In the air he breathed, in all his best associations, he met with it. Every near influence served to impress him with the locally accepted fact that a painter is at best an impractical and a visionary being, who would be a most incongruous figure to introduce in a staid row of Puritan divines. He had, himself, a profound respect for worldly success, and his character was not wanting in New England thrift and shrewdness. Far from madly vowing to follow Art at any price, and die, if need be, at her glorious feet, he decided, in a cool business-

like way, that as painting, in all probability, would not prove a practical means of support, it would be prudent for a young man, who had his own fortunes to make or mar, to begin to interest himself in something else.

But his nature was continually at odds with the limitations of his surroundings. It is therefore not surprising that, at the close of his college course, he was still irresolute as to the choice of a career. Moreover, sunny, debonair, and apparently thoughtless as he was, he had the saving grace to weigh himself in the balance with generally unsatisfactory results.

He accused himself of vacillation, want of self-reliance, many distressing weaknesses. But he resolved to give himself time to know his own mind. Finding himself what he called *soft*, he decided to harden. Having no clearly defined idea of the difficulties of self-support, he determined to support himself, and so learn them. Like a restless boy setting off for the Crusades to win his spurs, Hamor went West, where he met with work, adventures, hardships, and perils to his heart's desire, and by doing various things indifferently well, manfully earned his daily bread. The hardening process began speedily. At one time he was employed in a city shop, which he loathed. He taught school in a backwoods settlement. He *roughed it* with hunters and guides. As a pedagogue he was a success. The ancestral gift of expounding had descended upon him. Before his twenty pupils of both sexes, ranging from four to nineteen years of age, he felt himself master of the situation. He succeeded in teaching his boys more than they ever learned from books, before or since his epoch, constantly illustrating his themes by graphic sketches on the blackboard, to his own as well as their huge enjoyment.

He increased his knowledge of human nature and

certain occult sciences by pleasurably close observation of the habits of Indians, Chinamen, the polished faro-player, and the most ignorant and brutal vagabonds. He learned to sit an untrained horse, throw a lasso, handle a gun, and use his fists. Two nomadic years, chiefly among coarse people, and free from conventional restraint, may not have been unconditionally improving to a man of Hamor's temperament; but he had gained his object. He was hardened, and knew his own mind.

In the mountains, in the vast unbroken forests, Nature and his own heart revealed to him his destiny; and he felt at last that he was born for art, that painting was the one unwavering desire of his soul, the one life in which he could hope for happiness. He lost no time in bewailing his delay. He felt indeed that he had no time to lose. Returning East, he made whatever financial arrangements were feasible, received without compunction the somewhat startled and anxious blessings of his friends, and sailed for France.

Paris then succeeded to the backwoods, and incessant work, to the mutability of his recent occupations, — work that was keen joy to him, that seized and owned him. The technical training that he needed; the stimulus of a great atelier, with the companionship of scores of eager, ambitious young men; the free judgment of his peers; the brief, weighty word of criticism from masters, whose least glance of interest was an invaluable boon to a young artist, — Hamor had at last, and almost without price, so great is the help that France nobly gives, for Art's sake, to Art's followers.

He was speedily recognized as a man of promise. "A strong draughtsman," his friends admitted; but

they were apt to slightly shrug their shoulders when they spoke of his color. "There is something in him," said the experts. His comrades began to watch him, to ask his advice. But greater than any one's faith in him was Hamor's supreme faith in himself. "I am going to show them what good painting is. I can't yet; but I will before I die."

In the mean time — as his pictures had not yet a large marketable value, and since, in spite of a portrait not quite fatally hung in the Salon, after his second year in Paris, and even a "mention honorable," the world at large was unaware of the existence of our American Raphael — he found it expedient, after a summer in the lovely Fontainebleau Woods, to retire to a remote Breton fishing-village, for a season of inexpensive living, improvement in color, outdoor work, and inward growth.

If a racehorse could direct with superior intelligence the gradual development of his own speed and strength, coolly recognizing the necessity of a rotation of exercise, oats, and rest, he would bear a certain resemblance to Everett Hamor, biding his time with a long patience, preparatory to entering the lists.

Like most geniuses, actual or potential, Hamor had his share of startling inconsistencies. Good old-fashioned New England traits and rank Bohemianism played hide-and-seek in the nooks and crannies of his character, leaping out alternately to surprise the unwary. He was brusque and gracious, arrogant and modest, hard and tender, shallow and deep, narrow and liberal, prudent and careless — by turns. Any play of emotion in his immediate proximity was apt to vex or weary him. He distinctly preferred to live on the surface of things, studying human passion only in its distant picturesque effects. If a dense cloud of feeling seemed to threaten

him from any quarter, he would discreetly shelter himself under his moral umbrella. He could completely ignore a near appeal for sympathy; but something as safely removed from him as the sorrows of *Æneas* was apt to touch him profoundly. Indeed, the well-known passage, beginning,

“Infandum regina jubes renovare dolorem,”

he liked to mutter rather tragically to himself; and by the time he had reached

“Jam nox humido cœlo

Præcipitat suadentque cadentia sidera somnos,”

his face always softened perceptibly.

He was punctiliously courteous to the lower classes; and often, in these French country-places, would hasten his step to adjust a toppling bundle of grain on the head of some withered old crone, or to relieve a little maid of a package that seemed too heavy for her. He had even been known to offer his cigarette-case, with a charming smile of approval, to a rascally looking returned convict. This action was, however, by no means due to benevolence, but rather to an instinctive desire on the painter's part to repay, if slightly, the great artistic pleasure he had experienced in observing the man's heavy neck, sly eyes, small cruel mouth, weak chin, and all the mean and sordid lines indicative of the harmoniously developed villain.

But, in spite of this gentle consideration to strangers, beggars, and thieves, Hamor was capable of a rare disregard of the comfort and idiosyncrasies of his friends. He was an extremely poor listener, and an inveterate and oblivious interrupter, caring, in general, little for what other people had to say. Any dissertation of an earnest nature bored him, and he had not always the

social grace of feigning an interest in it. He would often chatter volubly, in a sunny, irrelevant, expansive fashion, about topics as indifferent to himself as to his hearers, unconscious that the mental wires were down between him and his surroundings, and regardless of the general devastation.

A habit of his, perhaps more fantastic than false, was that of posing, or trying his own effect, in different mental attitudes, against different backgrounds. It was, upon the whole, a harmless eccentricity, practised chiefly upon very young women with wondering eyes; and he was apt, in rare movements of self-analysis, to be somewhat ashamed of it. Indeed he was prone, at widely intermittent intervals, to spasms of penitence for all his failings; but in general he did not occupy himself with very rigid introspection.

He had, in short, many characteristics which, in case of his success, would be cited as eccentricities of genius, — in case of failure, would unquestionably be classified under a less complaisant head, — and which may or may not have been originally due to the instinctive efforts of a timid and suspicious nature to range itself with less sensitive material. Wayward in non-essentials, Hamor was a man of principle in matters which he regarded as the real conduct of life. His theories were often scatter-brained; his acts were usually simple and sensible. His deed was better than his word.

Physically he was an attractive man. The long lank American figure — which his countrymen seem not so much to have inherited from their ancestors, as through some unexplained process to have borrowed from the former occupants of the soil — never seemed to incommode him. He had no unusual strength, but was exceedingly well trained in all kinds of bodily exercise.

An easy fashion of wearing his clothes, evidently regarding them as of the least possible importance, was one of his salient properties ; but a man whose high head and rarely beautiful profile would have had dignity, emerging from an Indian blanket, might be pardoned for rebellion to his tailor. His secretive obstinate mouth, with the prejudices of centuries lurking in its corners, was flatly contradicted by a smile so sunny, kind, and free, that the wild little Breton girls soon smiled back at him under their prim white coiffes, and forgot to be afraid of the stranger. Changeable eyes, too near together, glanced from beneath a narrow and solemnly ministerial forehead, giving him a singular effect of a charming faun wearing the mask of a Plymouth deacon.

Hamor was then enigmatical, elusive, and not what women call a satisfactory person.





CHAPTER III.

SOME days after the great sardine-catch, Guenn Rodellec went to the river. Going to the river was an event which took place three or four times a week in Plouvenec, but its frequency made it none the less delightful to Guenn. How could she fail to enjoy it? All the women clustered on the bank, kneeling and washing their linen, and spreading it out to dry on the clean grass, reeds, brambles, and tufts of heather and brake; and everything, positively everything that had happened in Plouvenec since the last time, — with much, indeed, that had not, — related in stirring style by practised tongues.

Guenn had gone to the river earlier than most girls, and was rather proud of being one of the regular members of this great sisterhood, that bleached clothes diligently, but never by any chance whitened a reputation. Girls who had mothers rarely went to the river very young. Even here, where childhood was so

unguarded, there was a tacit understanding that it was in a certain sense a decided step in a girl's life, a crisis, when she first went to the river. She was old enough now for anything. It was an event of as much importance as the first ball of a girl in the great world.

But Guenn, having no mother, began in her ninth year to represent her family in the washing conclave, and to look forward to its chronique scandaleuse with as much eagerness as a fashionable young lady awaits the next instalment of a sensational novel. She could now hold her own, in racy anecdote and piquant repartee, with the most virulent old fish-wife among them. It was always dull, or worse, at home. Nannic was never there; for all day long he was hanging about the wharves, listening to the sailors' talk, or begging sous and lumps of sugar of strangers at the inns, — trading cleverly upon their pity for his misshapen little person, or opposing his uncanny slyness to the brute force of the other boys.

If her father was sleeping off the effects of a bad carouse, Guenn was wise enough to be out of his way when he waked; and for this she had her good and sufficient reasons. So, like Rodellec and little Nannic, the young girl regarded her home as a mere sleeping-place nights, to leave by day as early as possible. Then often she was employed in M. Morot's usine, and sat in the long room, with the best workwomen, packing sardines with swift, accustomed touch. Being clever, bold, and shrewd, she was often, indeed, one of his buyers.

But these occupations were as fluctuating as the wind and weather which caused the greater or smaller catch. Some days the boats came in so loaded that every available woman in Plouvenec was summoned to work,

if need be, all night long. Monsieur Morot was, so far as business allowed, a kind man, and liked to excuse the younger girls from the wearisome night-work; but Guenn was strong and ambitious, and when they told her she was too small and young, she would laugh, and gayly remain at her post.

Then, other days, the great usines were empty, and the women were free to knit and gossip and walk the streets and sit on the wall on the beach, as they pleased. They were paid, not by the day or hour, but by the number of hundred fish packed, and were all at the orders of Monsieur Morot, or any other person to whom they were engaged, for any hour, day or night.

This late September morning the boats were all out far beyond the Lannions, — *au large*, as the fishermen would say. The warm sunshine streamed through hazy autumn air, upon fields of purple heather and waving buckwheat, smoky broom and shadowy flax; upon apple-trees and mistletoe, and massive granite walls, overgrown with a riotous tangle of rich moss, tall ferns, ivy, holly, and blackberry-vines; and upon the thick row of great oak-trunks growing along the wall, shorn of their glory, yet still asserting their absolute monarchy, holding up bravely to the world their crowns of meagre foliage, — the best their stout hearts could produce, to cover the loss of the mighty branches gone. And the sunshine fell strongly too on Guenn Rodellec's strange, dark, little, Breton home, built of upright blocks of granite, — ancient and sombre as the Druid stone, the menhir, in the field near by, — one narrow window in the thick wall, through which a feeble ray of light penetrated, disclosing the earthen floor, the great fireplace with a few coals smouldering on the hearth, and in the gloom of the chimney-corner,

the great ancestral walnut bed, — the *lit clos*, — three stories high, where Hervé Rodellec was sleeping out his drunken sleep.

In one corner was an old oaken armoire, with silver locks and hinges. In another stood a black-oaken table, with a bench on either side. There was a bench too by the bed, the inevitable oaken bench seen in every cottage, and inseparably connected with simple Breton life — its births, its deaths, its homely joys, and *mia* makings. The dignity of age in the few pieces of rich wood, with their primitive but good carving, contrasted with the otherwise bare details of the sordid interior. The house was cheerless and dark, since in the old days granite was everywhere present, as was war; and thick walls, with small loop-holes, were a protection against the foe, — whether it were heat, cold, or man's cruelty. Then, in a land where Druid priests once chanted their songs of praise and offered sacrifices to the sun-god, the seigneurs later, with fine but unconscious irony, taxed the peasant's windows.

Guenn this morning had mechanically pushed a little pot of buckwheat-porridge nearer the smouldering embers, completed her toilette, by putting on her faded red kerchief and faded blue apron, — and the snowy coiffe, with its substrata of skull-caps, between which, tress by tress, she laid her beautiful hair. All this complicated process took place by means of deft little pats and strokes, without a hairpin or a mirror, Guenn having and desiring neither one nor the other. Then, singing the refrain of a light and amorous ditty, — which had no more meaning or importance to her than the stupor of her drunken father, — she sprang blithely into the sunshine, her basket of clothes on her head.

With her free, long steps she went rapidly down the

sunny road, between the massive fern-covered walls and mutilated giant oaks. The breeze called out all the warmth of her young cheeks. Her clear, bold eyes searched the whole landscape. She turned down one of the narrow shady lanes so common in Brittany, — a *chemin creux*, loveliest of forest paths, cool, fragrant, silent, delicious; its smooth stepping-stones and undulating surface worn down far below the level of the woods, by the tread of toiling feet through centuries; rude walls, bearing a wealth of ivy, honeysuckle, and ferns; sunlight flickering on golden-green moss, and, to-day, upon the pale russet of the first dead leaves. Guenn sprang lightly and swiftly from one stepping-stone, irregularly placed in the boggy soil, to another, rarely lifting her hand to steady her basket, and singing all the time, with her innocent voice, her very wicked little song.

Rodellec's house was on a lonely road, somewhat remote from the village. Guenn, this morning, arrived late at the assembly of her peers. The women were in full force, already hard at work, — kneeling in their boxes, which rested on smooth flat stones fairly in the water, soaping, dipping their linen, and pounding it on the stones with heavy little wooden paddles, — all chattering at once, and exchanging volleys of what elsewhere would be termed insult and vituperation, but which, in Plouvenec, seemed to represent a certain form of the amenities of life. The broad, shallow stream was caught and made into a pool by a heap of large stones, through and over which it oozed out, and lost itself in the sands. Beyond the dunes lay the meadows. On the Plouvenec side were walled fields, — oak torsos and rich vines growing from the granite. On the opposite side, across the white beach, rose great crags. It was

a free and beautiful spot, filled with sunshine and sea-breezes.

Guenn came springing down the bank. She observed with delight that old Mother Nives and other veterans were present, a sure indication of a lively morning. Jeanne Ronan too, whom Guenn liked, was there.

"There's Guenn!" cried some of the younger girls.

"Oh, you're a nice lot, you are!" was Mademoiselle Rodellec's courteous morning salutation, her hands on her hips, a light smile of conscious power, like that of a famed gladiator entering the arena, playing about her mouth. "You could n't any of you take a little more room, could you, or a few more of the best places at once? Modest, you are! Move your things over, Marie, and be quick about it too. I'm coming there by Jeanne."

Marie grumbled, that people who came late better take what was left, upon which Guenn unceremoniously pushed the girl's basket aside, tossed her box and loose clothes in various directions, and coolly usurped the desired position.

Having made this triumphant entrance, she plunged into her work, saying in an undertone: "What's in the wind? Anything new?"

"Mother Nives's rheumatism has left her. She's got five weeks' cooped-up hatefulness to let out."

"I thought I smelt fire and brimstone," laughed Guenn.

"Are you two little fools gabbling about me?" called an ugly old woman in a dark-red petticoat, from the opposite side of the pool.

"Oh, no, Madame Nives," Jeanne answered blandly. "I was only asking Guenn why she's so lazy to-day."

Mother Nives glared suspiciously at the two roguish faces.

"Ah, mon dieu, que la vie est amère!"

sang Guenn, beating time vigorously with her paddle on the stones, and smiling audaciously at the enemy.

"H'm!" sneered Mother Nives. "Your life is likely to be bitter enough. Just keep on with your monkey-tricks, and I can tell you where they'll lead you, Guenn Rodellec!"

"Madame Nives knows, because she's been there herself," interposed Mother Quaper's strident tones, advancing to the fray, not in the least on Guenn's account, but because she never declined the pleasure of a little round with Mother Nives, with whom, however, she was by no means on bad terms, as Plouvenec neighbors go.

"Been where, Madame Quaper?" demanded the old woman, with dangerous suavity. "I've been about my own business, which is where you never were yet, Madame Quaper. You wash your clothes and I will wash mine, Madame Quaper, or one of us will be missed by the river for several to-morrows, Madame Quaper."

This was considered by the listeners one of Mother Nives's best efforts, the veiled suggestion of personal violence being particularly admired. But Mother Quaper, upon whom all eyes were now turned, was equal to the occasion.

"Madame Nives means that the judge of the peace is going to lock her up in good earnest, this time, as a public nuisance," she exclaimed. The repartee, based on historical fact, caused laughter and cries of delight.

"Ah, mon dieu, que la vie est amère!"

Guenn and Jeanne, bending over the water, dipped and sang in unison, laughing maliciously.

"The judge is a fool," remarked Mother Nives, discreetly introducing a new theme. "He would try to make you believe a sardine is a mackerel."

"And his smile is as oily as both of them," observed another woman.

"The bon homme blows hot and cold, and north and south, at a blast," said Mother Quaper.

"Because he's a coward," added Guenn scornfully.

"Did you hear what he did about the Fouesnant pig?" asked a large blond woman, who had been spreading her wash out to dry, and now stood at her ease, looking down upon her kneeling sisters.

"No, tell us, Nona!"

"Yes, we should like to hear what one pig did with the other," Mother Nives said, in her delicately humorous manner.

"The pig was in a flax-field. A man drove him out. Somehow the man broke the pig's leg. It was his neighbor's pig, you see. They quarrelled about it well, and came to blows. They were only stupid peasants, and —"

Nona was here interrupted by angry remonstrances from the women who represented the purely peasant element, in contradistinction to the sailor and fisher population.

"You idiots, hold your tongues!" roared mighty Mother Nives, rising to quell the tumult.

"Let Nona tell her yarn," thundered Mother Quaper, waving her paddle majestically.

Before the allied forces of the two most puissant fish-wives, the peasant insurrection subsided in murmurs of discontent.

"I say — I, myself — that they were stupid peasants, and came to blows," resumed Nona, doggedly. "But trying to break each other's skulls did not seem to mend piggy's leg. So they came over to Plouvenec, before monsieur the judge, and he told them they were both very fine fellows and clever fellows, and they'd better go back to Fouesnant, to think about it ten days and see if they could n't arrange matters. They went back, and thought and thought, but it did no good. After the ten days, they came back to the judge. What did he do but say that they were fine fellows, clever fellows, and that piggy must be killed; the man who broke its leg should buy it, and their next-door neighbor, who is also a fine, clever fellow, should decide the weight and the price? Everybody's satisfied, and the judge makes no ill-will. He smiles; they smile; the neighbor smiles. And so, good-day to you!" Nona walked briskly away, across the dunes.

"The judge is hand and glove with all the strangers and artists. They are mostly brainless chaps, to be sure. They don't see through him." Mother Quaper shook out a bathing-towel.

"Brainless! It's a wonder they don't all fall off the digue," Mother Nives added acrimoniously.

"Now this young gentleman," and Mother Quaper held up a shirt to general inspection, gazing at it meditatively, with an "Alas, poor Yorick" air, "this poor little dear Monsieur Staunton," — she looked as if she were beholding Staunton in person, instead of his innocent garment, — "a good-looking gars to be sure, and the finest of linen. Rich as a duke, most likely; gave my Kadoc ten sous yesterday. Well, as I was saying, my neighbors sold him some old sails for his studio, — the Lord above knows what he

wants of them, seeing as he can't sail his studio on the bay —"

"Window-curtains, and such," called out Jeanne Ronan, instructively.

"Curtains or fiddlesticks, for all o' me; but they made him pay twice as much as the very best brand-new ones are worth. I heard it all. How I laughed! If they had n't been neighbors, you know, and old friends, I'd have given him a wink. Such a good-looking gars as he is, ce cher petit Staunton!" Down went Mr. Staunton's shirt in the water with *éclat*.

"Well now, nobody can tell anything about *messieurs les artistes*," and little Jeanne raised her voice with conviction. She was a model, and knew what she was talking about. "Perhaps he was n't cheated, after all. If the sails looked old and rusty and faded and dirty and patched and stained — why, he liked them better than new ones. He wanted to pay more for them. Here is my kerchief. It was a beauty once," — glancing down at it regretfully. "You remember, Guenn? I bought it at the Beüzec Pardon." Guenn nodded assent. "The spots were bright blue, and the stripes were bright red, and the criss-cross lines were green and yellow. Now, what do you think? Mr. Staunton would n't paint it; — would n't so much as look at it, until the colors had all run together and it was dirty. He said it made his eyes ache. He called it hard."

"A cotton kerchief hard!" screamed the women in derision.

"That's what he said; and now, when I don't like it any more, and put on my new one, he sends me home every time I come without it. There was a yellow cashmere baby-blanket little Hélène had. All the artists called it a *glory*. They hung it in the sun and they

hung it in the shadow, and upside-down and wrong-side out. It had a big darn, but it was a glory all the same."

"A glory, a glory!" laughed the chorus. "Oh, mon dieu, a glory!"

"And so I say you can't tell anything about them, because they are different," concluded Jeanne philosophically.

"Because they are idiots!" was Mother Nives's acrid amendment. "And as for your pretty gars, with his fine linen, he owes his carpenter's bill, let me tell you that. Who knows but he's only *show* rich?"

"And this much I can say," began the heavy peasant-girl Marie, several times pushed aside as of no importance, and glad now to swim with the current, "since Nona Hévin has been posing for him, she has n't a decent word in her mouth for anybody. My grandmother says it does n't bode much good to girls when they get their heads turned by the artists. They are no better than they should be, the most of 'em. What happened to Yvonne, and whose fault was it but an artist's? Though my grandmother does say she was always a silly, vain thing, herself. And as for Nona Hévin, with her airs," — shaking her head significantly, — "we shall see!"

Jeanne looked up angrily; but Guenn sprang to her feet, and with uncompromising directness exclaimed hotly: "And why did n't you say all that when Nona was here? Because you did not dare, Marie Brenn! And it's a great deal you know about models and painters! Only you know very well nobody wants to paint your ugly frog face, and that makes you say mean things about the pretty girls. Nona is as good a girl as there is in Plouvenec, and Jeanne is the very best one. You'd better not say anything more about models!"

"The blessed Virgin forbid that I should be one," persisted Marie piously; "and whether Jeanne likes it or not, my grandmother says, in Paris, models don't wear clothes. So there, Guenn Rodellec!"

Ejaculations of unspeakable astonishment followed this statement. Guenn's own amazement was boundless, but she would have died rather than betray it, or let it be even faintly surmised that Marie Brenn could give her the least information upon any point whatever.

"Well, who does n't know that?" she retorted, staring haughtily at Marie, without the quiver of an eyelash. "Perhaps you and your grandma had better set up a school to teach the rest of us our A B C's. Does n't everybody know there are black, heathen people in Africa and Italy, and such out-of-the-way places? They don't wear clothes, because" — hesitating a perceptible instant, then, with laudable aplomb, concluding — "they haven't got any to wear. They wear skins of animals, and such things. They climb trees and eat roots," she added, in a superior but somewhat vague manner. Descending from these heights of knowledge to her own territory, she advanced with splendid rapidity. "But I'll tell you what, Marie Brenn, — even if heathen don't know much, they can't be worse than you, saying behind a girl's back what you don't dare say to her face, and giving a dead girl a mean hit, too! As if it was n't enough for poor Yvonne to drown herself and die, and her soul on a wave beating against the cliff every night!"

Guenn and all the women gave an involuntary glance at the towering crag, and crossed themselves. Marie, crushed by the weight of so much learning, after a little pause retorted sullenly: "Well, you never posed yourself, Guenn Rodellec!"

"Well, I never did," Guenn said mockingly.

"But they all want her," cried Jeanne eagerly. "Monsieur Staunton, Monsieur Douglas, the French painters, the new one, — everybody wants Guenn, everybody! Only she won't come."

Guenn tossed her pretty head. "Why should I stand still, with a water-jug in my hand, eight mortal hours, like you, Jeanne? I should throw the jug at the idiot and run away. But if it amuses you!" — she shrugged her shoulders and laughed.

"Oh, I like it well enough," Jeanne admitted cheerily. "I must say, it's better fun than the usine. They let you rest. But they are a queer set, and no mistake. Monsieur Douglas painted old Josèphe with her distaff in the wrong hand. I went into fits of laughter every time I saw it. He was at it six weeks. All the painters stood in front of it and told him how beautiful it was, and cackled like so many geese. One morning he said: 'Jeanne, you will tell me how you like my picture;'" wickedly imitating Mr. Douglas's solemn British-French. "'Oh,' said I, 'if it pleases monsieur — Josèphe's nose is shorter, and her eyes are squinter, but so ugly as the picture she never was; and O monsieur, — the distaff is in the wrong hand!'"

"But what made Josèphe hold her distaff wrong?" demanded half-a-dozen voices in amazement.

"As if Josèphe cares!" began Guenn contemptuously. "These painters are all mad, you know. Jeanne's Monsieur Staunton kneels down and says his prayers to a mud-puddle, with a bit of light shining in it. Monsieur Douglas picks up a fish-head on the road, and looks at it as if he was the curé reading his breviary. If they had told Josèphe to coiffer her distaff, and wear her sabots on her head; she'd have done it all the same. Oh,

many's the time I've watched Jeanne through the gate, and Monsieur Douglas standing so," — giving a dramatic representation of Mr. Douglas's manner and attitude. "'Raise your left eyebrow, Jeanne. Draw your foot back. Breathe quite easily. Head to the right. Eyes to the left. Ah, charming! Now we will begin.' Then, after a couple of hours, 'Rest. Begin — Rest.' And so on all day. — 'Here is your money. Come to-morrow at eight.' — Do you suppose I'd put up with that? Am I a stick or a stone, or a trained poodle at the fair? 'Give your paw, Guenn. Sit up and beg, Guenn.' No — no — no!" And raising her arms high above her head, with a swing of her lithe body expressive of the joys of savage freedom, Guenn resumed her duties as independent washerwoman, with a clear and sweet —

"Ah, mon dieu, que la vie est amère!"

Jeanne laughed merrily with the others.

"Oh yes, Guenn is hoity-toity enough," sneered Mother Nives. "But the young fellow who saw all her hair loose may see it again. Sainte Anne d'Auray! Was n't the girl a sight, when milord the painter was looking at her?"

"Who cares about him!" Guenn exclaimed quickly, with heightened color.

"I saw him coming," the old woman went on, giving a mysterious leer. "In the candle I saw a stranger, the night before he came. I named three bits of straw, for you and Jeanne and Nona; when I blew, Jeanne and Nona flew over, but you fell into the flame."

Guenn, with a defiant toss of her head and a deeper flush, retorted: "Keep your candle-fortunes for yourself, Madame Nives;" but she was uneasy neverthe-

less. Had not she herself, the very day she saw him on the sands, heard — alone at home — a loud noise three times repeated, as if the old armoire was trying to speak? Everybody knows that means misfortune. And did not a little gray bird fly more than once in her path as she came through the woods, — quite fearless, though she was so near, and looking at her strangely with its little round eyes? She knew well what soul had returned in the form of a bird, to warn her of impending evil. Then, when madame, at the Voyageurs, asked her to pour out a glass of wine in the kitchen, she had spilled it on a white napkin. More misfortune!

All that in a couple of hours. Guenn had felt oppressed by these evil signs, but had put them out of her mind as soon as possible. Now old Mother Nives reminded her of her forebodings. Well, was it not misfortune enough to stand there with her hair hanging down, before a man, and to have them play her such a mean trick? She never believed more than half of anything the Nives said; still —

That amiable person, observing that she had accidentally said something which disturbed the young girl, continued venomously: "You mark my words, you'll be posing like a lamb before long. He did n't lose much time with your father that night. He's a cool one. He can put out firebrands."

Again Guenn was lost in uneasy thought. She remembered, against her will, every feature of the stranger's face, as he calmly looked on her sorry plight, and as calmly afterwards restrained her father's drunken fury. Jeanne anxiously pulled her friend's sleeve. What could be the matter? Guenn, whose tongue never failed her, was surely not going to be beaten publicly by the Nives.

But Guenn rallied. "If he ever comes to me," she said impudently, "I'll send him to paint you and Loïc."

Now Madame Nives and her son Loïc were, even according to the unexacting Plouvenec standard, the ugliest people in existence; moreover Loïc, like many another young man, sighed in vain for Guenn Rodellec.

The mercurial chorus shouted with glee.

"You minx!" cried Mother Nives in a fine rage. "But I dare you to swear you won't be his model. You will, I know you will."

"Well now, I don't intend to be driven by anybody," Guenn returned stoutly. "I won't say yes to please him, or no to please you."

"What's the man's name, any-way?" demanded Mother Nives.

"Hamor," replied several women, who frequented the Voyageurs kitchen.

"Madame, at the Voyageurs, has him in tow?"

"And he can be thankful if she has. Ah, what a brave femme! She never gets into a rage, and calls bad names," exclaimed Guenn, whose specialty was rages and bad names, — "and strong as a man. A man indeed," — with high disdain, — "what are men? — Strong as a lion!"

"It's easy enough to be a brave femme with an inn like hers, and a good business, and nothing to do but to smile at the men;" and Mother Nives looked about with an evil sneer. Madame was a favorite; still, this picture of worldly bliss tried the souls of the women. "Well, that's true enough, and no mistake," many of them cried enviously. "She does have an easy time of it." But Mother Quaper, Guenn, and Jeanne laughed in loud derision.

"O you poor sillies!" Guenn said, shaking her head with mocking commiseration. "Don't you know madame's little finger is wiser than the whole of your stupid bodies? There's nothing she can't do. There's nothing she doesn't do. And with shoals of people about, making a pow-wow and all wanting her at once, she looks as strong and still as a menhir in a thunderstorm. How I'd like to see you all having her easy time at the Voyageurs!" She threw back her head, with her pretty mocking laugh. "Marie could keep the books" — dull Marie being hardly capable of counting fish. "Elise" — another especially inefficient young woman — "could look after the cooking and marketing and gardens. Louise" — a careless, tattered girl — "could take care of the linen and mending. And Madame Nives, because she is so gentle and everybody loves her, could keep the maids all moving smoothly, and smile at the gentlemen. Oh yes, — oh yes. How nice it would be then at the Voyageurs."

This bit of special malice created considerable uproar and angry retort, when Madame Nives, with an eye to business, inquired: "Is the new one rich?"

"Yes," answered several girls. "He throws his sous about like water. All the boys were jumping for him on the common last night. And he smokes no end of cigarettes."

"Who's to have his wash?" continued Mother Nives.

"Madame Quaper, if you are sure you don't mind at all," answered Guenn wickedly.

"Is it your doing?" the old woman said with an oath.

"Never you mind her nasty temper, Guenn," roared Mother Quaper.

"My temper ain't so nasty as my fist, Madame Quaper, and don't you forget that!"

"Well now, I never heard anything so kind of awe-inspiring;" and Mother Quaper's hoarse voice broke into unmelodious laughter. "It makes me have the — what is it, Jeanne? You ought to know! What is it that the fine ladies have? You see them when they come to look at the pictures."

"They don't have anything particular, except the giggles," Jeanne answered, reflectively. "They seem to giggle mostly."

"There's a woman at the Voyageurs with the nerves," suggested Guenn gravely; "madame told me so."

"That's it," cried Mother Quaper, with exultation. "Guenn, you were always the brightest girl! The nerves. That's what I mean. Well now, Madame Nives, that's what I'm taken with, sudden, when you talk so painful. Where do they have them?" she asked Guenn in an eager whisper.

Guenn looked doubtful. "All over, I suppose. They run down the spine of your back, don't they?"

"I must say you've got a lot of learning, Guenn," Mother Quaper said admiringly. "Madame Nives, I've got the nerves in the spine of my back, and —"

"Bah — that's rheumatism," retorted Mother Nives, "and the bon dieu himself can't tell me anything about that! Nerves indeed, Madame Quaper! There's no such thing; and if there is, it is n't for such as you and me."

"Oh, but there is, and I've got them!" persisted Madame Quaper, with a grin of delight.

"There's Morot's boat!" Guenn sprang eagerly up, shading her eyes with her hand.

"And what if it is?" grumbled Mother Nives. "Is

that anything new? Is n't he always sailing and sailing, while we are scrubbing and scrubbing. What did he ever do in his life, but eat and drink and sail and amuse himself," snarled the bitter old fish-wife, accompanied by murmurs of mingled sympathy and dissent. "Lazy puppy, and his father before him,—and his grandfather, that hanged himself in the granary." She crossed herself furtively. Every other woman did the same. "Some folks sail, some folks scrub; that's life. As for me, I would n't turn my head a quarter of an inch to see Louis Morot's boat, unless it was to see it sink!" The old woman glared straight before her at a pair of blue socks, which she wrung in a vindictive manner.

Guenn retorted angrily, "What's the use of lying all the time, Madame Nives? Why don't you stop and rest once in a while? Answer me," she said imperiously, addressing each and all. "Who is the best sailor in Plouvenec? Monsieur Louis. Whose boat goes out in storms that send all the rest of them howling into port? Monsieur Louis. And is n't it his own boat? Then who has a better right to sail it, I should like to know. Who gives smiles and francs, and one as free as the other? Monsieur Louis. And how many of our men has he saved at the risk of his life, and he only a young fellow too! And who looked after Loïc Nives when he was down with a broken leg? Monsieur Louis! So I don't think I'd hit him behind his back, even if I was you, Madame Nives!"

"That's true, Guenn," cried the mobile chorus. "She'd better keep still about Monsieur Louis! She'd better hush!"

"And what is he doing now?" Guenn waxed more impassioned with every word. "He is bringing over the Recteur of the Lannions." Her strong gaze searched

the boat. "I know, because I see. That's what he's doing, good Monsieur Louis! And he could n't do anything better, unless he should bring us an angel from heaven; for where the Recteur goes, comes a blessing and a joy, as everybody knows who is n't a knave or a fool, or both. And Monsieur Louis will take him back with his supplies, and he's always looking out for him. And that's the kind of man Monsieur Louis Morot is, and shame on anybody who says he is n't, and she's got something still to hear from Guenn Rodellec, and here I am!" The girl stood with folded arms, her flaming eyes challenging them all.

"I say he is n't." Mother Nives's arms were akimbo, her face was venomous. "I say he's a dandy and a do-nothing, and if he swamps his cursed boat some day, and the precious pair drown together, I'll stand by and grin. I hate the father. I hate the son. As for your priest, there are too many priests,—too many priests. He'd better drown,"—and she laughed her croaking laugh. "Oh, you can't frighten me with your big eyes, Guenn Rodellec,—shoot fire out of them as you will. What if he did cure Nannic's fever? Do you think anybody but you thanked him for that? Ugly, crooked little brat—always in the way!"

"Oh come now, come now!" expostulated the women. Even the brutality of Plouvenec had its limits.

All the brightness faded from Guenn's face, and the little figure—so lightly poised, as she had gallantly defended Morot, and followed every movement of his boat—grew rigid with passion.

"You old devil!" Ugly lines gathered about the young mouth as it spoke the ugly words. "You say another word about Thymert, or about my brother

Nannic," — she spoke slowly, with great pauses — "you understand, one word about the Recteur or my Nannic —"

"Bo-o-o!" cried a shrill voice. "Here I am!" and the wizened face of a humpbacked child, with large eyes like Guenn's, and a sly, unpleasant smile, peered from the bushes on the wall.

The women crossed themselves. By oaks and running water, *nains* and *korrigans* might at any time appear. With many another old Druid superstition, this was a part of every Plouvenec woman's secret belief.

The boy came half-way down the bank and seated himself, resting his pale face on his hands, his long elbows on his knees, — motionless, watchful, uncanny.

"Who called Nannic? I was miles away, and I came." He made this preposterous statement solemnly, and as if he were chanting. His keen eyes searched the group. Madame Nives, with a guilty air, was busily washing. In spite of her boasts, she much preferred giving to receiving curses, and had a wholesome dread of the evil eye. The other women were all staring up at him. "Madame Nives," called the cripple, "it was you who said Nannic. I came. I will come to you again some time at the stroke of midnight, when every corpse stirs and opens its eyes!"

The color crept back to Guenn's cheeks. The ugly lines left her mouth, and the rigid extended arm fell by her side. With a beautiful smile she looked at Nannic; then out on the bay, where Morot's boat was just rounding the point. Her face grew tender, her great blue eyes bluer.

"Gamin," she said with inexpressible affection, "wait for me."

"I am waiting for Jeanne," answered the boy perversely.

Guenn laughed. "Même chose," she said brightly.

Spreading out what remained of her linen, she gathered together her belongings, and, with Jeanne and Nannic, walked along the beach.

"Ah, mon dieu, que la vie est amère,"

sang their fresh laughing voices.



CHAPTER IV.



THE curé of the Lannions stood at the half-open door of Rodellec's cottage and knocked. Hearing no sound but the rustling of the foliage on the dwarfed oaks, a lizard darting along the sunny wall, and the long plaintive note of a curlew far up in the hazy sky, he bent his head and entered the dark little house. It was as Guenn had left it hours before. The little pot of porridge stood untouched on the cold hearth, by a heap of ashes, and the man still slept in his tomb-like bed.

The curé sat down on the bench by the table, leaned his head on his hand, looked scrutinizingly about the room, and sighed heavily. Thymert had the face of a man of the people, — dark, strongly moulded, weather-beaten, indicative of a nature more used to impulsive action, than to the contemplation of intellectual subtleties. With the dignity of his priestly office he combined the carelessness of the sailor; while the consciousness of power, which his unlimited authority in his island-realm lent to his manner, was accompanied by a simplicity as perceptible in the strong man of twenty-

five, as long before in the round-faced peasant-boy of eight, whom the good priest of Beûzec employed as acolyte, — teaching him with much pains his genuflections, patient with his blunders and rude ministrations in the ancient little church, and finally leading him to study for the priesthood. Ordered to the Lannions, his first living, he had remained there because his superiors discreetly concluded it would be impossible to supply his place. An ambitious man could not have contented himself with this humble post, — curé of a hundred souls: poor fishermen, whose rude houses were scattered here and there on nine bleak islands; who knew birth and life and death, sickness and health, with the roar of the mighty Atlantic sounding always in their ears; who heard no sound from the mainland, though empires fell. But Thymert was not ambitious.

A placid country pastor — making his rounds through pleasant ways, his old nag sleek and well-fed like himself, his duties small, his comfort great, his benevolence unquestioned and untried — might have found himself sadly out of place, transplanted into the austerities of Thymert's life. But he never moralized about his position. He was recteur of the Lannions, — and all was said.

Priest, doctor, comforter of the women, friend and comrade of the men, strong enough to stop a drunken brawl, not too absorbed in prayers and heavenly meditation, to perceive when quarrels and feuds were about to develop, — Thymert was king of his savage islands, earning his kingship. His boat was moored before his door; and at any moment, day or night, — though the Loch might be half submerged, and the waves besieging the fort on the Cigogne like an army, and booming against the great rocks of Penfret, as if in jealous effort

to reach the very top of the lighthouse tower, — careless of storm and danger, he would go, at any signal of distress, to minister to his people. Simple, faithful soul, man to the core of his brave heart, the young sailor-priest scrupulously discharged the duties of his calling. Yet often in the rude chapel on the Loch, whose rough walls were adorned with votive offerings of ships and glaring images of Our Lady of the Isles, mass was performed with almost miraculous speed, when the curé had just heard that some little urchin on the last island had broken his leg ; and once, when he was summoned to old lame Jean, suddenly down with a fever, he was seen leaping impetuously about the chancel a few moments, — then disappeared altogether ; and to this day, the two old crones, who were mumbling their prayers in their accustomed corner, cannot affirm whether monsieur le recteur that morning said matins or vespers, or nothing at all. But they liked him none the less for that, their impulsive, warm-hearted young curé. As to Our Blessed Lady of the Isles, it never occurred to Thymert to question which would be more acceptable to her, when the choice lay between a sonorous liturgy in her honor, or a manly, helpful deed to her poor folk.

The curé sat quietly waiting in Rodellec's small, dark room. He instinctively shrank from the interview which he was seeking. It was easier for him to reef a sail in a gale of wind, than to meet the exigencies of this occasion. Except under excitement, he was not a fluent man. Words oppressed him at times. He had not much confidence in them, and they were apt to abandon him at his need. A dumb soul, like that of a faithful hound, sometimes struggled for expression in this man's eyes. He waited a half-hour — scarcely with

patience, yet motionless — by the table; then, looking at his watch, he rose quickly and stood by Rodellec's bed.

"Hervé! Wake up, man!" he said, with first a gentle and then a vigorous shake of the sleeper's shoulder.

Rodellec, muttering an oath, turned over heavily.

"Wake up, Rodellec! I want you! I've come for you!" and the strong voice, accustomed to be heard above the roar of winds and waves, now reached the man's dulled senses.

He started, opened his eyes, and saw, half blindly, the black figure. Crossing himself repeatedly, he began mumbling hurried, distracted prayers to Saint Hervé of Plouvenec, and Saint Jean de la Roche.

"I am not the devil," said the priest gravely. "He has not come for you, — not yet, Hervé," he added with grim humor. "I am only Thymert. I have come to talk with you. Will you get up now?"

Rodellec crawled out of his bed as he had crawled in, in a half-dressed condition. Morose and stupid, he dropped upon the bench and gazed with listless eyes at the curé standing before him, a slanting beam of light from the little window falling upon the threadbare soutane and broad shoulders, long black hair, dark earnest eyes, and emotional mouth, but half trained to the sternness it now wished to assume.

"You can't listen like that," the priest said with dissatisfaction. "Drink something. I suppose you cannot eat. Is there no water here?"

"That cursed girl of mine," grumbled Rodellec.

Thymert spied the porridge, as well as a great green jug of fresh water.

"Here!" — and his face softened, — "the little girl

did not forget you. Cool your brains with that," — pouring a gallon of water into a great earthen bowl. "Again, again!" he cried, as Rodellec plunged his heavy head into the cool water, — then dried his hair on one of Guenn's long blue aprons hanging in the chimney-corner.

"Have you nothing to drink?"

"If it's all the same to you," replied Rodellec in a shame-faced way.

"Drink then!" said Thymert imperiously.

Rodellec reached up to the shelf for a quart of old, hard cider, from which he took a long draught, and, after a pause for breath, another.

"Do you want some?" he said to the priest, who replied by a disdainful wave of the hand; then rising, he lifted the porridge from the hearthstone, and offered it to Rodellec.

He took one spoonful, and pushed it aside with repugnance. The curé shrugged his shoulders. "I thought as much," he said. Rodellec refreshed himself with several more draughts from the flagon of cider. Presently an expression of alert cunning stole into his eyes.

Then Thymert said simply: "You are yourself now, Hervé? You are awake?"

"That I am, and glad to see the best friend a poor devil like me ever had," returned Rodellec with an air of bluff cordiality.

He was by no means a bad-looking man when neither drunk nor in a brutal rage. His reddish-brown hair, touched with gray, waved back like Guenn's from a broad forehead. His eyes, true Celtic blue, more merciless than any dark eyes in the world, — the eyes that harden in anger and give steel-like flashes of hate

and cruelty, — were now smiling at the curé with pleasing frankness.

Simple people, who like to entertain the ingenuous conviction that an ungovernable temper indicates honesty, and that only the false nature controls itself, — also, that a villain never looks you squarely in the face, — might have suffered an overthrow of their pet theories, with an intimate knowledge of Hervé Rodellec's career. His bold eyes fell before no man. They could gaze, without blinking, at the sun, spy a sail on the distant horizon, stare innocence itself out of countenance. The violence of his passions did not prevent him from possessing the supposed opposite qualities of craftiness, cruelty, and avarice. His instincts were brutal, his constitution was a marvel of strength, his liver faultless. Consequently, he never knew one moment's remorse for any crime he had committed, any suffering he had caused. Tears would start easily to his eyes as proof, to the credulous, of tender feeling; but his hard soul never wept. He was a hypocrite, even to himself, and could only be influenced by his greed or superstition. Such a man might easily have deceived a clever student of human nature, who, wishing to be just, would ask himself, What is true here, — what is false? But Thymert's safety lay in his extreme simplicity. Like a child who learns his English Kings, — draws his strong line of demarcation through the tangled mazes of history, and says, unfalteringly: "Richard was good, John was bad," — so Thymert's mind was also free from subtle perplexities of good merging into bad, and bad creating good. To him, Rodellec was a false man, therefore a bad man, to be regarded with incessant, uncompromising distrust, — his maudlin tears, his oaths, his smiling friendliness, all emanating alike from the Father of Lies.

"I only want to speak about the children," Thymert said, quietly ignoring Rodellec's outstretched hand.

"My dear children," began Rodellec in a sentimental whine, "all that are left to the old man now, and Barba gone to the angels."

"You forget that you are talking to me," said Thymert coldly. "Why waste your time, Hervé? No words can change what you and I know. You are not an old man; you are a strong sailor, in your prime. Barba is gone to the angels, — God rest her pure soul," (he crossed himself devoutly,)—"but Guenn and Nannic are still with you. I want to take care, if I can, that a drunken kick does not send either of them to the angels before their time."

"Has that brat of mine been telling on me?" demanded Rodellec angrily, with an oath, and a blow of his fist on the stout table.

"I have not spoken with Guenn since the Pardon at Bernodet. Something tells me when to come, Hervé."

Rodellec crossed himself hastily.

What Breton peasant does not believe in revenants? and Barba was Thymert's cousin. Then, familiarly as the curés may live with the people, something of the veneration of their ancestors for the Druid priests and bards still lingers with the superstitious Breton folk.

"I did hit her the other day, but it was an accident," he muttered uneasily.

The dark face of the priest flushed to the temples.

"It was a mere trifle." Rodellec raised the cider-flagon to his lips, and smiled reassuringly at the curé.

"Rodellec, unless you want to burn eternally in hell," began Thymert solemnly, "you will not harm the children. Is it not enough to have killed the mother

and crippled the son? I promised Barba, on her death-bed, I would protect the children. They were hungry at Bernodet, Hervé; and Guenn had an ugly bruise on her cheek. — No, she did not tell me what it was. Guenn does not tell tales, any more than a carved saint in a niche. I asked her. She tossed her head, laughed and said, 'Même chose,' and ran off to dance the gavotte with Jeanne's brother Alain. Brave little Guenn!" The young man's face softened into a gentle smile of remembrance.

"She is an undutiful daughter. She neglects her poor old father, and gads about the streets; and that's the truth, monsieur le recteur."

"She is a faithful, hard-working child. She brings you forty francs a month, and more, from the usine; besides what she earns extra as buyer, for errands, and for help at the Voyageurs. But if she were all you say, and worse, whose fault would it be?"

"Things have gone badly with me," Rodellec complained. "I have no wife to look after my house. I have no money. I have no luck with my fishing. I have a son who is a humpback. I have a hard-hearted daughter. I am an unlucky man." He eyed Thymert slyly under his drooping lashes.

"Tell that to your drunken companions," the curé answered scornfully. "Listen to me, Rodellec," he said, with his most imperious air. "This is not the first time — it will unhappily not be the last — that I come to you for your dead wife's sake, and for the sake of her children. If they were nearer me, if I could take care of them at the Lannions, — if there were any way —" Over the priest's young face flitted a warm, conscious look.

"You would not separate a father from his children?"

Rodellec sniffed and wiped his eyes, — considering the francs that Guenn brought home.

“I ask no promise of you,” Thymert continued sternly, utterly disregarding the interruption. “I don’t believe your oath on the crucifix, your prayers before the Great White Throne. But this I tell you. You are not to give your children blows, and you are to give them bread. Nannic must go to school. Guenn must be properly clothed and looked after, — looked after, do you understand? Poor child, she has only you — you, and all these strangers and dangers about — you, and she so little and so young — you, and that beautiful bright face — you, Hervé Rodellec, worse than nobody! But listen!” — and Thymert rose threateningly — “if you let her go cold and hungry, if you dare to strike her once again with your cruel fist, if you lead her into any harm or danger, I will denounce you as an accursed thing. I will tell all Plouvenec what I know, — outside of the confessional, mind you, and what I may tell like any other, — and no honest sailor will sail with you for fear of his own soul; and no man will eat or drink with you, and you shall go up and down on the earth, a leper and an outcast, cursed by man, cursed by the Church, — and every piece of gold, buried somewhere in your field, cursed where it lies, cursed in its use, cursed —”

“Monsieur le recteur,” gasped Rodellec in terror, “monsieur le recteur!”

Thymert stopped, sat down, and covered his face with his hands. “What am I doing?” he murmured.

“Monsieur le recteur,” — and Rodellec’s outstretched, brawny hand trembled perceptibly, — “did you curse me then? Is it already done?”

“No — no, man,” replied the curé in a low voice, without moving.

"I am poor. I have but little gold," whined Rodellec, "a mere handful put away for my old age; but I will offer ten francs to Our Lady of the Lannions, and five to Saint Hervé of Plouvenec, and Guenn can have a new gown and a kerchief, and the boy shall go to school. I always meant to send Nannic to school. You are quite sure that I am not cursed, monsieur le recteur?"

Thymert removed his face from his hands. He was very pale, and looked at Rodellec in an absent, weary way. "Take care of your children," he said. "There are dangers for children in a place like Plouvenec."

"Dangers?" Rodellec was relieved to find himself no longer the subject under discussion. "What dangers? Guenn is a wildcat, and they are all as afraid of Nannic as if he were the devil's own imp." He laughed heartily.

"I must go." Thymert rose abruptly. "I have still much to do. Remember what I say, Hervé. I shall know if you do not. Something will tell me. Good-day."

"Oh yes, I shall remember, monsieur le recteur," said Rodellec, following him to the door. "Never fear" — dreading a stronger repetition of the curses which he felt he had barely escaped; "ten francs for Our Lady of the Isles, and five francs for Saint Hervé of Plouvenec, and a gown and a kerchief for Guenn, and Nannic is to go to school. Ah yes, I shall remember, monsieur le recteur."

Thymert did not once turn his head, or notice him again, but went swinging down the road in his old soutane, his open breviary in his hand.

That night, when Guenn came home, her father was already there. "Here," he said, "take that and wear

it." It was a pretty half-silk kerchief, dark-red, and soft for a young girl's shoulders. Guenn frowned and put her hands behind her.

"Don't want it," she said sullenly.

"You wear it to-morrow, and you tell them all I bought it for you, — do you hear?" he said with a menacing look in his eyes, advancing towards her.

Guenn did not answer. Had the kerchief been woven of poisoned threads, she could not have regarded it with more suspicion and defiance.

"Tell them all — Jeanne and Nona, Madame Quaper and madame at the Voyageurs, and all the women at the usine — that it was a present from your father. Well, why don't you speak?" shaking her roughly. Guenn's face set with a more dogged obstinacy.

"If you hurt her, he'll know," said a voice from the corner. Nannic had stolen noiselessly in, and with his long elbows on the table, his pale face in his hands, was calmly watching the scene. Rodellec was startled. Nannic had an unpleasant habit of startling everybody except Guenn, who was never surprised or distressed by any whim of his.

"Who will know?" demanded the father.

Nannic smiled maliciously.

"Where were you this morning?" asked Rodellec uneasily.

"Down on the shore, playing with souls — playing with souls — souls — souls," chanted the boy with a strange rhythm of his own. He had discovered, very early in his young life, that his father's heavy hand could be arrested only by a clever appeal to the supernatural. The rôle he had assumed to protect his weak body had grown to be second-nature, and it was impossible to say to what degree Nannic was playing

fine comedy, and how far he actually believed himself endowed with the prophetic gifts of the ancient Breton bards and seers. As he could insert his diminutive person into very small spaces, and had no insurmountable prejudice against eavesdropping, his strong curiosity and very good memory were richly fed; and Nannic Rodellec, in spite of his youth and deformity, found his fellow-creatures an interesting study, — often an amusing plaything.

“Tell me what you mean. What have you seen and heard?” said his father violently. “Talk, for once, like a human being.”

“I saw all that there was to see. I heard all that there was to hear, playing with souls — on the waves — waves — waves,” rolling up his eyes, and fixing them intently, and in an unpleasantly suggestive manner, on a point behind his father’s head.

Rodellec involuntarily glanced over his shoulder. Somewhat ashamed of yielding to the impulse, he said roughly: “Nannic, you are to go to school. Go tomorrow, and put some sense into your empty pate, if you can.”

“I knew I was to go to school. I will go, but they can’t teach me anything. I knew it all, long ago — long ago — long ago.”

Guenn looked affectionately at her brother, and laughed.

“Nannic, what did you see?” she said quite gently. “What do you know to-day?”

“I saw Thymert,” answered Nannic bluntly, like an ordinary child. “I want something to eat, Guenn. I’m hungry as a dog. I want some crêpes.”

“Oh!” said Guenn, with eagerness.

She stooped quickly and picked up the kerchief.

“Did Thymert make you buy this for me?” she asked her father boldly. “Was he here to-day?” She began smoothing it softly. It looked pretty to her now.

“Wear it, little fool,” he said brutally; which was the last word Rodellec vouchsafed his family that night. Guenn smilingly folded it, and carefully laid it away before she went for Nannic’s crêpes. Soon the Rodellecs were sleeping as peacefully as if they had been gentle, well-bred, and united.





CHAPTER V.

HAMOR pitched his tent at Plouvenec with characteristic ease. He was soon installed in his studio, had adapted himself to the prevailing customs, and begun work. There were thirty or forty artists in the neighborhood, leading apparently the happiest life in the world. This polyglot colony was accepted by the natives, in general, with stolid sufferance. To them, the painters were all foreigners, — a genuine Breton having no more in common with a Parisian than with a Norwegian or a Greek.

The artists increased somewhat the liveliness of trade in Plouvenec; a fact appreciated by its shopkeepers, who liked their small gains and knew how to hoard them.

Plouvenec at times was noisier than a great city, and with its bustle, mixed population, and summer visitors, was slowly becoming more or less modernized. Its petite bourgeoisie regarded itself with pride, and had

its local scandals, feuds, and rivalries, like the rest of the world. It ordered foulards and antiquated fashion-plates from Nantes, which showed a certain power of assimilation. Still, in the population of pure Breton descent, among the peasants, sailors, and workmen, much remained of the old Celtic element, of the "hearts of oak, hearts of granite" proudly sung by Breton poets. The oak and granite attributes, however admirable in Breton ballads, seemed now to display themselves chiefly in indomitable resistance to new ideas. To this day there are to be found, in small hamlets and on lonely farms, men who live in the stone houses of their remote ancestors, and who have not made the slightest perceptible advance upon the ideas and civilization of a long-past age. They wear its costume, and, under their flowing hair, cherish its prejudices.

A man of this description takes care of his money in the good old Breton way, dropping it coin by coin into a bag, which he secretes in a snug corner of his farm. This conservative method of banking is apt to produce results which, even to the most optimistic vision, present an undignified picture of human nature. For, the moment the Heart-of-oak breathes his last, the next of kin, instead of devoting themselves to decorous mourning, are to be seen breathlessly upturning his field.

The heart-of-oak quality was also prominently developed among the mechanics of Plouvenec, as the artists found to their cost when they wished a bit of quick work done,—a window altered, or a packing-case in which to send off some pictures to Paris. Instead of a box lightly put together, yet sufficiently durable to bear a day's journey, the Heart-of-oak persisted in making the ideal box of his ancestors, massive as a

monument, firm as a dolmen, heavy as lead ; in itself an admirable structure, but wholly unsuited to the purpose for which it was created. The Heart-of-oak ignored instruction and expostulation, communing thus with himself: "Shall I allow a foreign gars to explain to me the properties of a box? Shall a man who spends his days in daubing paint on good sail-cloth dictate to me about dimensions, wood, and nails? Je m'en moque bien!"

But the painters occupied the land ; and the villagers, for the most part, tolerated them. As long as the strangers conducted themselves discreetly, bearing in mind that they were but aliens ; as long as they abstained from stealing the sailors' sweethearts, and turning the heads of the woman population in general ; as long as they forbore to interfere with fights, paid their bills, and let well enough alone, they were welcome to stride through Breton forests, to haunt the lovely chemins creux, to make telescopes of their hands and stare in rapture at the sky, to exhibit their familiar brown corduroys on every crag and beach, to put a girdle of camp-stools and easels round Plouvenec and all the adjacent hamlets.

But what the natives thought of the painters is quite a different matter. Happily we are not always required to define our impressions. An honest thresher, threshing with his chosen band in the field before his cottage-door, stops to answer the civil question of the stranger leaning over the gate. In the brief pause before the cheerful flail begins again, the thresher and his companions have drawn their conclusions of a man who, even as he speaks about grain, is rolling his rapt eyes heavenwards in unconscious search for a background. The sailors, lounging on the parapet at the end of the

digue, attract the pleased gaze of an artist. His glance falls with a certain tenderness upon their bronzed faces, their dull-blue blouses, their scarlet belts, their free action. He speaks with them. There is something warm and southern in their faded reflections. He is reminded of Genoa, of Naples. He composes a picture then and there.

Suddenly, across the shining waves, he spies a rarer subject. A bare-legged boy shrimping, and wearing, for motives of convenience, one short garment. Gray upon gray! A dull gray shirt upon a clear-gray beach, by gray-green water, — background, smoky green-gray genét against a blue-gray sky. Variations of æsthetic gray. A harmony! Atmosphere, values, distance, — such thoughts absorb the artist's soul. He forgets the existence of the bronzed sailors, his words die away unfinished on the air, his telescopic hands fly into position. Then, wheeling swiftly, he turns his back upon the precious gray shrimper, stoops and looks at him through an inverted *V* of brown velveteen. What can the brave Breton sailors think of this untrammelled action of genius? Surely, that the able-bodied stranger is either a madman or a fool, with perhaps a strong inclination towards the latter. The unconscious artist goes his way, making telescopes of his hands, framing landscapes with his legs. The sailors' thoughts are free. They exercise their sovereign right of ridiculing what they do not understand. Now, as in classic days, strangers are barbarians.

Thus the sturdy Bretons regarded the painters. Among the artists, while there were wheels within wheels of acquaintance, — and a man might happen to have a friend, two or more friends, no friends, — in general he was to another artist exactly what he repre-

sented in art, no more, no less. Jones was a man with a second medal. Brown had begun well, but was now painting abominable *chic*. Most of them were workers. If a man did not care to work, he was not apt to stay long in Plouvenec. Paris, indeed, was not far off, when one grew weary and discouraged, and craved excitement. They concerned themselves little about one another. It was natural to recognize a brother artist whom one passed every day in the same lane, whom one saw smoking an after-dinner cigar at the same table, or playing a game of billiards regularly in the café. Still, in Plouvenec every man was for himself. Now and then a stray fact would escape from the closed pages of a life, and produce a brief fluttering effect. But what did it matter, after all, whether the so-called Robinson was prince or peasant? The question was, could he paint?

Yet unrevealed, in the gay little painter-world, were half-finished romances, tragedies with the fifth act undetermined, unwritten poems, pathetic Madonnas of the future. Among them all, there was scarcely a man whose circumstances were quite propitious. One had shaken off the burden of uncongenial employment too late in life to ever become in art what he might have been. Mediocrity was his portion, and he knew it; yet he worked with feverish haste, as if to atone for the time he had lost, and with a great patience saw his inferiors mastering the technique which was his master. Another was depressed by the relentless opposition of his family to his career. Worldly ease and the woman he loved would reward him for deserting his art. Another, who, pure of aim, had forced his way through toil and privation, and won his freedom to follow his heart's desire, — he to whom life upon life would be

too brief a time for all his glowing fancy longed to reveal, — knew that his days were numbered.

Then, prosaic and displeasing as the fact may appear, the majority lacked the moral support of a comfortable income, and were chafed by the endless rubs life bestows upon spirits that disdain pecuniary restrictions, and meet them at every turn. The hero of the modern analytical novel seems too often to command unlimited wealth. His problems are purely psychological. When he suffers a disappointment in love, he is apt to travel first-class across two continents, or spend a winter in Egypt — burying his sorrows in a *dahabééh*, which he has engaged exclusively for himself and his faithful but expensive servant.

Then the poor but honest young man has reaped more than his share of golden harvests in moral tales. But who is moved to sing the manifold deeds of the unnumbered throng who all their lives have just too little, — who do not suffer from hunger or cold, who never wear patched raiment, or in any way appeal to the sympathies of the philanthropist, who have expensive tastes and the training of gentlemen, and always just too little to carry out their dearest wish, too little to be free men?

Such, for the most part, were the Plouvenec painters; and when one of them seemed chosen of the gods, when friends and wealth and talent favored him, and he had been dedicated, even as a child, to the service of Art, and now stood in his youth and strength with the world at his feet, — then the inevitable flaw was in his own soul, and he lacked the pure devotion, the “infinite capacity for taking pains” which Art exacts of her followers.

As a rule, the men with sad histories wore cheerful countenances, went blithely to their work by day, and

were the best possible company evenings; while the men of easy fortune, monotonous lives, and it may be a touch of dyspepsia, were apt to shun society, and in their settled melancholy, the imaginative eye could read a tale of doom.

Day after day, month after month, the artists worked on the meadows, by the lavoirs, and along the shores of the noble bay where the tawny sails were always passing to and fro, with hints of Venice in their ardent tone. And working, they were happy in spite of the past, the future, the fates, for such work is joy. From this little corner of Brittany, magnetic fibres, thrilled with aspiration and enthusiasm, reached to lands beyond seas, and trembled in response with a burden of prayers and hope and warm desire; and there were more colors on the painter's canvas than the world's eyes could discern. Of them all, Everett Hamor was perhaps as free as any one from inconvenience arising from affections or regrets.

He knew most of the artists by reputation, many of them personally, and had been much with Staunton and Douglas in Paris. Douglas was a long-legged brown-bearded Scotchman. He had a way of stalking into his friends' studios, silently staring about with extremely kind eyes, and stalking out again, solemn and silent as he came. He was slow of speech, usually deliberate in his judgment, yet capable of sudden and violent prejudices, — honest, obstinate, and kind. He liked to listen to a good story, and his pleasant, low laugh always followed one with a visible and brilliant point. But he often afforded his friends exquisite enjoyment, by his mild unconsciousness of the humor of a situation. His life had been full of difficulty and self-sacrifice, and he had but recently taken up painting. If

tenacity alone would make a master, Douglas was sure of fame. He was a cautious, conscientious man; and although no one else doubted his ability, he himself was by no means convinced that his degree of talent justified his devotion to art. This misgiving oppressed him frequently, and made him more silent than ever. His discouragement closed in around him like a heavy fog.

Staunton was a strong landscape-painter; and otherwise, an amiable young Englishman, with a compact, well-built figure of medium size, long gray eyes, and curly brown hair, closely cropped. He was endowed with aristocratic and influential connections, and spelled society with a capital *S*. He had travelled along the highways of life in irreproachable company. Byways were not to his taste. His views of society, religion, and politics were purely conservative; but when Hamor or Douglas chose to express iconoclastic tendencies, he would smile in his sweet-tempered fashion, and abandon the field of controversy. They were capable of hot discussions, of quarrelling about a principle, an idea.

Staunton's gentle tone was a part of himself. The courteous modulations of his voice were never blurred by excitement. His frank comment upon passing things was always ready; but his real reticence was greater than that of the silent, cautious Scotchman. Douglas would differ with you bluntly upon occasion. You would only suspect Staunton of differing with you, because you would fail to extract any opinion whatever from him. Hamor had once laughingly accused him of travelling incognito. "I travel very comfortably, at least," Staunton replied softly.

Why and how Staunton and Hamor had drifted together was a question each had frequently asked himself. But they felt, upon the whole, comfortable to-

gether, — which is perhaps the foundation of most intimacies among men. Then when Staunton looked at his friend's pictures, he dropped his incognito. The real man spoke unhesitatingly. In art, they found each other. Conventionality, exaggeration, and fantastic masks fell away, and they became simple and true. Each felt profound respect for the other's talent, and was proud of his success.

Hamor had been a week in Plouvenec, when he said one morning to his friends, as the three were taking their coffee, each absorbed in a newspaper, "If you have a half-hour to spare, come over and see my atelier."

"Atelier? I didn't know that there was another available room in Plouvenec. And you are welcome to mine. I told you so," said Staunton.

"This is not a room."

"I suppose it's a temple not made with hands, if you are in it. All your geese are swans," drawled Douglas.

"Come on," said Hamor oracularly.

"My dear fellow, do you flatter yourself that you can do the honors of Plouvenec to two old residents?" Staunton remarked, as the young men walked along.

"Well, I know I have found a good big place to work in. Even if one's out-of-doors most of the time, one wants some headquarters. You two can move your traps in, if you like."

"Come now, Hamor, I like that," Staunton said with a smile. "There's a tremendously conquering-hero air about you this morning. I don't see anything supernaturally clever in stumbling upon a room."

"Reserve your opinion until you see if I have stumbled. Here we are." And he ushered them through a high tunnel-like stone entrance, past heavy wagons,

and a red and yellow omnibus, in its brief hour of relaxation.

With an air of ownership, he took from his pocket a ponderous key, unlocked a gate which opened into a court about eighty feet square. It was empty and sunny, with buildings on three sides, and a high fence separating it from the paved lane or carriage-way through which they had come. Hamor locked the gate, and, smiling, made a sweeping gesture with his right arm. The young men stood looking about critically.

"Very good, so far," said Staunton. "Good place to dry pictures. What next?"

Hamor conducted them to the large building at the back of the yard. A rude outside stairway, its steps perilous and now and then wanting, turned the corner and led to the upper floor.

"My castle," he said, as they entered.

It was a garret of unusual size, with three deep dormer-windows looking towards the court, and three little loop-hole windows in the roof on the other side, staring up at the sky. The rough rafters were warm browns and grays — one end-wall, dull-yellow brick, the other of irregularly placed whitewashed stones. A huge white-plastered chimney rose in monumental fashion near the end of the room.

The place smelt of fruit stored there to ripen. Phenomenal cobwebs graced the rafters and broken window-panes, delighting the painters' eyes. Empty packing-cases were lying about the floor. Hamor piled up several of them.

• "Sit down, won't you," he said hospitably, at the same time seating himself.

"There's a good bit!" Staunton stared at the farthest window, muttering: "Jeanne knitting by that

broken stone window-seat — golden lichens on the roof outside — fine effect of light and values — very Rembrandt, — warm, rich tones in the background.”

“How did you happen to get here?” asked Douglas in his measured accents.

“By what the people who use dictionary-words would call the force of an imperious inspiration.”

“And in the kind of words you use?”

“Oh, I kissed a child, talked with a woman, got the keys, walked in, and took possession. It was very simple.”

“You kissed one of those children?” Staunton turned with considerable animation, and pointed in a comprehensive way at the stables.

“I did.”

“My dear Hamor, I beg your pardon if I seemed to object to the insolence of success in your manner just now. I am not the man to underrate heroism. Why, I would n’t kiss one of that brood to save your soul.”

“Thanks,” replied Hamor, laughing. Then reflectively, “I think I hit upon rather a clean spot.”

“Good heavens, it is inconceivable,” Staunton said gently.

“And I liked the little thing,” added Hamor seriously.

Staunton looked amused and incredulous.

“Now Hamor means that, you know,” Douglas commented.

“Ah,” said Staunton with a little shrug, “that alters the case. *De gustibus, &c.* But you don’t tell us how you managed to get this place. I’ve noticed the building often enough. I had the idea it was full of something — grain or timber.”

“Well, whatever it was full of, it is now full of—

genius. The fact is I was prowling about in search of a studio. To speak plainly, I don't like your stuffy little dens. Which was the saint who, when in doubt, threw his stick, and went wherever it pointed?"

"When in doubt he should have played trumps," Douglas interposed.

"He did probably. So did I. At all events I found myself in front of the stables, gazing up at that window over the entrance, and a woman and a child were gazing down at me. The stables were empty, except for a few decrepit nags. I had explored the whole place and the lane down there, and I saw that the court looked big and promising. I went back and planted myself prominently in sight. I took off my hat to the woman in the window. She came down presently and said that her mari was out, and everybody else was out; and if I wanted a carriage to go to Quimper, I would be obliged to wait until somebody came back. Three small and, I must say, exceedingly dirty children trailed down the stairs after her. She was a tired little woman."

Hamor smiled, and lighted a cigarette. "She seemed to like to lean against a post in the sunshine, and talk about Quimper."

Douglas groaned.

"I told her that I could n't settle myself down to anything until I had seen Quimper, — that the thought of Quimper kept me awake nights."

"Oh, come now," mildly expostulated Staunton.

"Well, I did ask her, with a kind of feverishness you know, how soon she thought she could furnish me with any sort of a vehicle, even the most rudimentary, to drive over there," Hamor went on, laughing a little; "and I agreed to come the next day and see about it."

Then, after patting the children at random, I discovered the prettiest one, and declared it was the image of its mother."

"I should have supposed that too feeble even for Plouvenec womankind."

"My dear Staunton, there is no place on earth where woman can resist double-barrelled flattery. Then, although I will not insist upon this point, I positively do like children, and children always like me."

"Ah?" said Staunton politely.

"But he means that," Douglas again explained, "and he is proud of it — heaven knows why. It's no proof of character."

"I am proud of it," Hamor said with grave emphasis. "I am very proud indeed, that children and animals like me."

"Granted," and Staunton affably waived discussion.

Hamor continued lightly as before: "And then I lifted him up high and dry, and kissed him on his cheek. As I said, I think it was a comparatively clean spot. They wash their faces Sundays, don't they? This was Friday. Not that I care," he added liberally. "Then I confided to the tired little woman, leaning against a post, some of my aspirations exclusive of Quimper. I ascertained that nobody used the granary, and almost nobody the wheelwright's shop at the right; while the stables, as you see, do not open upon the court at all. She and I finally roamed here in the granary together. Its possibilities impressed me. She, at least her mari, had the refusal of it, but it belongs to Morot. I saw him. Result, — granary and court are mine, for the paltry consideration of twenty francs a month."

"Morot, indeed!" said Staunton, surprised. "He might have suggested it before."

"Well now, you can't expect people to think for you. It's enough that we have it now, isn't it? You can move in down below, or, for that matter, make use of this upper loft whenever you like."

"Thanks. It's very kind of you, I'm sure — and a capital kind of barracks," Staunton replied cordially.

"That chimney's a ghastly figure in the landscape," remarked Douglas with a critical air.

"Oh, I'll paint a blazing fire-spirit on it," the lord of the manor said cheerfully. "The fireplace itself isn't bad, you see. I'm going to close up these beastly little loop-holes, and let in one large light overhead, — about here, I should say; and I'll hang some old red sails in the dormer-windows. Oh, I am charmed with it all, you know!" he went on expansively. "It's like the New England garret where I used to play when I was a boy. It only wants a few chests of musty old books and pamphlets, some corn and dried apples, and branches of herbs hanging from the rafters, — old garments in the corner, swaying in the breeze and filling out as if bodies were in them. How delightfully one's flesh used to crawl! And the fruity smell, and the winds whistling through the broken panes, and the cobwebs —" Hamor was smiling a little absently, with a strong look of reminiscence on his face.

Douglas stared kindly enough at the younger man. "Well, weren't we all boys? Do you think New England has any monopoly of garrets? Hadn't we all garrets?"

"I can't say that I ever played in one," Staunton admitted, somewhat amused. "I don't remember that we had one. But I am not to blame for my want of sentiment about it, you know — we were in Paris so much when I was a boy," he added in smiling apology.

"No, you could n't help that. There's a great deal you can't help, Staunton," Douglas said dryly.

"Here," — and Hamor flung open a door in the yellow wall at the farther end, — "I have all possible conveniences. Old Morot hanged himself on that beam. There are five other beams, — one for each of us and two to spare. Only discouraged painters need apply."

The young men glanced into the dark unfinished building, the continuation of Hamor's granary, but having only a ground-floor.

"It's an ugly hole. If one did not know about it, one could open the door and step off into the next world."

"Or at least into splints, and the like unpleasant concomitants of broken bones," added Staunton.

"Now it can't be on account of old Morot, that they do not use this great building," Hamor reflected.

"Of course it is precisely that," Staunton said with his pleasant smile. "These people are inconceivably superstitious."

"A superstitious age, like every other phase of human history," began Douglas sententiously, "has its distinctive virtues, which must necessarily decline before a new stage of progress can be attained. Lecky."

"No doubt, no doubt, but just ask Lecky what baneful influence ghosts are supposed to exercise upon grain."

"Ask old Morot himself, if ever you see him," suggested Staunton. "I must be off now, Hamor. I'll certainly move in, the first rainy day, and I'm awfully obliged, I'm sure. I forgive you for being cleverer than I. If you'll kiss the dirty babies and flirt with the tired little women, I shall always be glad to

come in for a share of the spoils, you know ;" giving Hamor his hand cordially.

"What will you take for your staff, Hamor?" Douglas asked slowly.

"It's not for sale, old fellow. It's my one earthly possession. But I must go down and unlock the gate for you." He produced his large key, and they walked down the narrow stairway and across the sunny court. "Upon the whole, I think I'll go along. Perhaps I can hunt up some sails ; and at least, I can begin instructions about my window."

"I wish you joy of that undertaking," Staunton said, with his wise little laugh.

"It will be the toughest work you ever did," Douglas added.

The three young men walked down the middle of the straight long road, between the high garden-walls.

The tired little woman, from her window over the entrance, looked after them with a sigh. Yes, it was good to be gay like that, to amuse one's self with painting pictures. And it was good to be a man. Then indeed one could laugh without a care in the world. Hamor had forgotten her as he passed out beneath her window. Now he turned suddenly, took off his hat and smiled back at her.

"Quimper," he remarked gravely to his friends, "was founded by somebody or other who escaped from the siege of Troy. It is celebrated for its cathedral, in which the line of the choir does not follow the line of the nave, but runs off fifteen feet towards the north. Quimper —"

"Confound Quimper !" said Douglas.

"I'm sure I have no objection," Hamor answered with a laugh.

CHAPTER VI.



FROM that time the little woman saw the three gay young men coming and going at all hours. She would hear them laugh under the arched entrance ; and then she would wait for Hamor's bright look up to her window, and his smile. She liked to watch them walk down the road between the walls,—the solemn man with the brown beard ; the smaller man, with the quick step and pleasant eyes. They were all amiable young men, and gay ; and that she liked. But surely for kindness and grace, and the most charming smile in the world, there was never a man like Monsieur Hamor.

They came in and out separately too. The man with the beard sometimes walked slowly in, his head drooping, his eyes fixed on the ground. She could almost think he was sad, but that was absurd. How could a man be sad who had nothing to do but to sit down there in the sunny court and amuse himself ? Then, how a *man* could be sad at all was a mystery to the little woman. The one in gray, with the pleasant eyes,—

he, too, would now and then come in late in the afternoon, with a grave face and a slower step, and would often forget to look up to her window. He had a great picture with him.

He was tired, no doubt. She realized that men could be physically weary. But Monsieur Hamor never hung his head, never looked tired, never forgot his cheery greeting. She knew his light, rapid step as far as she could hear it. Best of all was when the three came in and out together; for when Monsieur Hamor was with his friends, there were always jests and pleasant laughter, which rose to her window and made all the air around seem gay.

Staunton and Douglas had moved their possessions into the lower half of the granary. Staunton in these days was usually off, working upon a large landscape, down on a distant beach. Douglas was devoting himself assiduously to one model, whose vivid red petticoat he intended should *sing* in the foreground of his picture of a group of washerwomen at a lavoir. It was an interesting subject. His oaks were good, and the action of some of his women. His water was "not yet wet enough," Hamor told him, when summoned to criticise; "but a pool of soapy water need not be so wet as waves," he added, "and paint all round your women, Douglas, — paint behind them. 'Get in behind your subject,' as Millais used to say." All day long, with brief intervals of repose, the woman knelt in the middle of the court, her square back turned towards the artist, the *singing* red folds over her broad hips absorbing his whole being. Hamor often smiled involuntarily as he glanced down upon this motionless human hump, and upon Douglas — patient, solemn, and silent — before his easel.

Hamor's studio, completed, received the unqualified

approval of his friends. No radical transformation took place in it. He made no efforts to introduce into his rustic quarters Japanese screens, tiger-skins, old Venetian silks, Gobelin tapestries, pontifical robes, or any attribute of a luxurious Paris atelier. Garret and ex-granary it remained, in unabashed simplicity. But the distracting loop-holes in the roof were suppressed, and a broad skylight went in, — a triumph of the carpenter's skill, and of Hamor's tact and persuasive powers. The goodman who made it never knew himself how the thing was done. The vastness of the scheme and the rapidity of its execution were facts he was unable to reconcile.

When he passed down the lane by the granary, and saw his masterpiece basking in the sunlight, he gazed at it with emotion akin to religious awe. Who knew better than he how much time a man needed for a job like that? Had he not received a medal for being the fastest driver of nails in the whole shipyard at Brest? Well, then, could anybody tell him anything about rapid work? But this window partook of the nature of a miracle. A vision of a little votive-window, hanging along with the little votive legs and arms and ships at the shrine of Saint Hervé, haunted his excited fancy. But the young man with the happy smile, who drove a few nails himself rather cleverly, and handled a rule fairly well, and took some of the measurements, and got on so easily with the children, and was continually running in and out with a gay word for everybody, — what of him? Might there not be, after all, something heretical, if singularly attractive, about the window and its associations? And little enough, if the truth were known, had he thought of Saint Hervé while making it! He had had no time indeed to think of anything but of

the strange gars, who had come in as fresh as a May breeze, and taken possession of his tools, his workshop, and himself. The carpenter's religious theory was simple. The complexity of this situation bewildered him. He concluded to return special thanks to Saint Hervé, and offer him a fine long taper, but to omit the contemplated addition to the little arms and legs.

It would be at best an innovation. But he nourished his soul with pride in the skylight of mushroom growth, and every morning made a triumphal tour down the lane. His best hammer and chisel were always at Hamor's service, his ladder reposed amicably on Hamor's floor. He delighted in doing odd jobs for him, and could with difficulty be prevailed upon to accept his modest dues. Hamor had the carpenter in thrall.

It pleased Staunton and Douglas to make characteristic jokes upon the subject, but they never fully grasped the secret of Hamor's success with the multitude. With the models, as with the workmen, it was the same thing, Douglas complained. They all came more willingly to Hamor, and gave him better service. One practical but ignored reason for this, was that his French was attractive. Staunton used habitually more correct and elegant French than he, — "swell-dinner French," his friends called it derisively; but Hamor's unhesitating lingual affability was better adapted to the fisher-folk. He enjoyed his popularity, and was as proud of it as if it were an evidence of intellect or strength.

One day Douglas, moved to unwonted curiosity, stalked up stairs and catechised him.

"I say, Hamor," he began, "I don't see but that you're a long-legged, awkward fellow, pretty much like me — are n't you?"

"Well, yes, I should say so," Hamor replied, laughing a little, — busy with an ébauche, and not turning.

"I don't see anything extraordinary about you," Douglas said, with the utmost gravity.

"Neither do I. What's the matter now, Douglas?"

"It is Jeanne," explained the slow Scotchman. "She does n't pose as well as she used to. She is uneasy when it is about time for her to come up to you. She is invariably late when she comes down to me. I don't think she likes to come down to me."

"Oh, I'll make that all right," Hamor said, turning and looking at his friend with a pleasant smile. "I'll speak to Jeanne about it."

"Yes, but why should you be able to make it all right, any better than I? That's exactly what I want to know."

Douglas seated himself very deliberately on some piled-up sardine-boxes, and stared soberly at Hamor.

"Does n't your red woman pose pretty well?"

"Like a block."

"She does look a little like a stepping-stone."

"But that is n't posing, you know. She has simply to double herself up, and keep still until I tell her to move."

"Now, Douglas, do you know I never see those tempting outlines without wanting to play leapfrog?"

"Oh, you think if I should play leapfrog with my models it would increase my influence?"

Hamor laughed. "Well, yes, — mental leapfrog."

"I'm not acquainted with the sport," Douglas returned dryly. "But I am in earnest, rather, about Jeanne. She really ought to pose better." His tone grew injured as he specified his grievances. "She

ought to be light and airy, you know, with one hand raised to the basket of clothes on her head, and just stepping off, and turning and smiling and listening. Well now, she does nothing of the sort. She holds her waist as stiff as a ramrod, and listens — yes, she listens, certainly, — but in the wrong direction. She is always listening to hear you whistle and sing, and waiting for you to call her. The red woman does n't count. What do you do to Jeanne and the others? That's what I want to know."

Hamor broke into a hearty laugh. "Douglas," he said, "you are delicious!" Then hesitating, still smiling: "I am sure I don't know what I do. I let them feel at home. I give them the freedom of my room, for one thing."

"Well, why should you not? There's nothing very fragile up here," turning his eyes slowly from the rough rafters to the broken stone window-seats of the great bare garret.

"And I am kind to them, I suppose."

"I am kind, too," remarked Douglas with conviction.

"I am a very kind man."

"Yes, but confound it, — since you insist, you lack humor, don't you know?"

"What in the deuce has humor to do with my models?"

Hamor laughed again, and began filling in his ébauche with heavy strokes of his brush. "I mean you take them too seriously."

"Well, painting is a serious thing to me."

"And to me?" Hamor said quietly, standing with his back turned, his hand moving rapidly.

"Yes, I know," answered Douglas honestly; then crossed his long legs and reflected.

There was a prolonged pause, during which Staunton came in with a wet picture, and deposited it carefully, face to the wall.

"See here, Staunton," Douglas began at once, "I am asking Hamor why our models like him best, and pose best for him?"

"Do they?" said Staunton softly.

"No doubt of it."

"Well then, I don't know why."

"What makes the lamb love Mary so?" "Why, Mary loves the lamb, you know," Hamor suggested lightly.

"Oh, come now, my dear fellow. That's all blague, and you know it. You care as little for them as I do; which is obviously nothing at all, except as they serve my purpose."

Hamor whistled, and stepped back to study his work.

"Now I was rather curious about this," Douglas complained.

"If you wish my opinion," — began Staunton.

"Oh, don't rouse false hopes. Whoever may knock, your opinion is not at home."

"You are quite welcome to it, this time, my dear Hamor," replied Staunton, laughing gently. "I think you should have been a fashionable doctor. You have an experimental tendency. For women, you would be unsurpassed. That tender voice, sympathetic manner, and coldly observant vision! How the misunderstood would throw themselves into your arms, weep on your shoulder, and confide to you that nobody loved them! A doctor or — a curate. You would n't be a bad curate, do you know?"

Hamor looked for a moment at his friend. "Upon

my word, Staunton, I trust you think me an honest man."

"I think that you are—the best draughtsman in Plouvenec," Staunton said affably.

"C'est déjà beaucoup. It is better than honesty."

"Now, I believe you," rejoined Staunton, smiling.

Suddenly Hamor turned and faced the two men, a flash from his inner consciousness illumining his whole face.

"I'd see them all drowned and damned before my eyes," he exclaimed, "if it would help me paint as I want to paint." His lips set sternly.

"Ah," Staunton whistled softly under his breath.

"And you call yourself kind?" remarked Douglas. "Well, if this is humor, I think I'll keep on taking things seriously." Without another word he stalked out of the studio and returned to his work. Presently Staunton, with a friendly adieu, also disappeared.

Hamor, left alone, forgot the whole conversation, — even the existence of his friends, — and lost himself in his drawing.

He was a singularly happy worker, painting systematically and steadily in his atelier and in the open air. Jeanne and Victoria, and other regularly engaged models of his friends, posed for him, and he began several *pot-boilers*, as he scornfully called the small, rapidly executed pictures which he prepared for the market, while musing upon greater things. Deep in his heart, he longed for Samson, Ajax, and the Madonna and Child. Hamor was a man of moods, but a mood in which he could not work, rarely mastered him. When he found himself unfitted to approach one subject, he devoted himself to another. If he felt unequal to depict the glory of the sunset, he could concentrate his powers

upon a pair of wooden shoes. In short, in his art, when far from the lips that he loved, he made love to the lips that were near. Jeanne knitting, Jeanne and Victoria winding yarn, Victoria and Jeanne gossiping in the sunshine down in the court, were in various stages of completion; while his sketch-book was rapidly filling with boys and sailors in striking attitudes, lovely bits and corners of landscapes, and genre pictures of the daily life of the Plouvenec folk.

Victoria had long regular features, entirely devoid of expression. The young men who painted *chic* were apt to infuse into her stolid countenance whatever they desired; and Victoria, idealized, was continually travelling off to Paris, suggesting vague longings her sleepy heart had never known, or, in the art of the bonbonnière, simpering with the sentimental coquetry of the young women whose glazed features embellish handkerchief-boxes, or, pure as a field-flower, a veritable Breton Madonna. Jeanne was fresh and rosy, always in demand, engaged months in advance. She was a good and pretty girl, with little sentiment, and no grace except the inevitable grace of extreme youth.

"I can't borrow my models all winter," Hamor said one day impatiently. "Jeanne is commonplace, as a constant study, and Victoria stands and walks like a cow. In fact, she looks like a cow. If I ever paint her again, I shall put horns above those placid bovine eyes, and make her chewing her cud. Really, I must have the Rodellec girl."

"Oh, you won't get her. Everybody has tried," Staunton answered.

"I suppose she has her price," said Hamor carelessly.

He was sure that Guenn would eventually become his special model. It was written. But although she was

visible everywhere, bringing life and laughter in her train, she was thus far as unapproachable as an enthroned queen. A queen, indeed, though encompassed by guards and ceremonies, is a stable personage. One knows, at least, where she is; and even she yields to the laws of etiquette, and respects a petition presented in proper form. But Guenn Rodellec was as elusive as running water, as mobile as a firefly. A seagull on the bay knew as much etiquette as she, and proper forms she would have laughed to scorn. On the common, evenings, her clear voice led the girls' chorus, that sang light-o'-love songs and church chants almost in one breath. Swift, straight, and maidenly, she trod the meadows and mossy ways, the village streets, and the shores of the bay, or, her great basket poised on her head, the shady *chemin creux*; and always her young lips and bold, honest eyes were smiling defiance at every stranger. When the dusky fleet of fishing-boats came home, Guenn held her own with jest and repartee, — not always of the most delicate flavor, — and, among the noisy fish-wives and crafty buyers, made shrewd bargains for Monsieur Morot.

Late nights, on the extremity of the point, as the last heavily laden boat plashed softly by, her light figure stood poised on the farthest rock, her face set against the wind, all the soft chestnut rings on her forehead fluttering back, and her eager voice hailing the patron.

"Who is it?"

"Jacques."

"How many?"

"Twenty thousand."

"Morot offers fifteen francs."

"Not such a fool!"

"Fool if you don't! They're going at fourteen."

Boat glides on. The girl runs along the rocks.

"Well, patron, do you sell to Morot?"

"Who are you?"

"Guenn Rodellec."

"Is it the truth that you say?"

"When did I ever lie? You are late, *mon vieux*, but the good Morot will take your fish at fifteen francs the thousand. Done?"

"Done, since it is you, Guenn Rodellec." And when the boat nears the quay the buyers shout in vain.

Laughing on the dunes with Jeanne and Nannic, working with the older women in the usine, fearless, boyish, sharp as any gamin forced to live by his wits, with a rude honesty that did not even recognize temptation, she threw her whole soul into the occupation of the moment, and was, whatever she did, a power in the place, a distinct personality. Even Plouvenec, upon occasion, took exception to her manners, her pride, her laughing insolence; but wild as she was, running loose among rough men at all hours of the day and night, her purity was as stainless as the winter snows on the summits of the Montagnes Noires.

Hamor saw her everywhere, brilliant, buoyant, a ring-leader of mischief. Meeting him she never shunned his gaze, but gave him one hearty scowl of recognition and hostility, then pointedly got out of his way. She looked so handsome with the carnation color mounting to her passionate little face, her blue eyes darkening, and her lips curving scornfully, that Hamor would not have had it otherwise. But he began to ask himself how long these preliminaries must last. If he should force circumstances, he would endanger his plans. He could not knock at her door, as honest Douglas had done, and ingenuously request her to pose for him. He could by

no means risk the public refusal accompanied by contumely, which she would assuredly bestow upon him, should he accost her, surrounded by her satellites.

"I will leave it to time and chance," he thought. "My day will come. The more indifferent and cautious my approach, the more surely I snare my wild-bird." In the mean time he took pains to meet her often, and always looked at her gravely and kindly, without speaking. In her presence he liked to discuss some matter of the studio with Jeanne, who was proud of her association with him, and chattered of him continually.

"Ah, how kind he is, this Monsieur Hamor!" she said one day rapturously; "and how bête you are not to come and pose. Think, Guenn, — two new kerchiefs from Quimper, and a silver-and-blue jacket!"

"Rags!" remarked Guenn superbly.

"And bonbons! — Ah, what good bonbons!"

"Munch them," said her laconic companion.

"And Monsieur Hamor is so gentil and so gay. He smiles and whistles, and sings like a lark! Ah, but it is lively up there;" and Jeanne gave a little sigh, remembering the intervals of solemnity with Monsieur Douglas down below. "If you would come and pose for Monsieur Hamor, Guenn, he would give you a new kerchief," she said disinterestedly, "or lace for a coiffe, or even a gown — who knows? When one is so amiable as Monsieur Hamor, one is — capable de tout!"

"Tu m'embêtes, Jeanne," Guenn broke out passionately, "with your Monsieur Hamor here, and Monsieur Hamor there, and Monsieur Hamor everywhere! What is he to me, with his head as high as the phare, and his eyes seeing everything on land and sea, — along the sands and the dunes and far out on the bay, — and smi-

ling, smiling to himself as if he could read the thoughts of your heart, and knew more than the angels!"

"Tiens—but I thought you never looked at him," said Jeanne innocently.

"Look at him? Not I, indeed! And why should I look at him? Do I look at the phare, and do I not know where it shines? There are things one sees with one's eyes shut, my stupid little Jeanne. The great oak on the Beûzec road—can I help seeing that, even if I look towards Trévignan? And the cliff on the third beach, where poor Yvonne threw herself down, and they found her cold and dead—do I not see that, and the sun on the waves below, where it shines and hurts your eyes? That is how he smiles. That is how I see him. I see him always,—wherever I go, where he never was,—in the usine, in the long row of women,—when I go home through the fields, alone under the stars, by the dolmen where it is so still, by the great menhir, in the woods, on the beach,—and when I take off my coiffe and let down my hair, and when I say my prayers, and when I close my eyes, and when I sleep,—always and everywhere, with his high head and his eyes—oh, his eyes! And smiling, smiling, smiling!"

"Mon dieu, but how you hate him, Guenn!"

"Ah yes, I hate him well."

"It is a pity," said little Jeanne simply; "he is so kind. And, Guenn, he is not so tall as you think. Monsieur Douglas is taller. And as for the phare and the Beûzec oak,—well, you are a funny girl!"

"It's all the same. Tall or short, I hate him. He's a man."

"Oh no, Guenn, he is not a man; he is an artist. It is quite a different thing," Jeanne said gravely.

"They may speak soft, but they are men all the

same. And men are all alike, — except monsieur le recteur des Lannions. Men get drunk, and lie, and beat their wives, and catch a few fish, and boast of it, and get drunk again. I hate them. There's only one man in the world who is n't like that, and he is the recteur of the Lannions. He is an angel."

"O Guenn, O Guenn, as if Monsieur Hamor would beat his wife, unless, indeed, she was a very bad one, like Mother Nives: and a man would have to beat her, or she would beat him; and he has n't any wife; he is only a jeune homme, — and if he had one, it would n't be a bad old woman; so, you see, he would n't beat her!" cried Jeanne in triumphant incoherence.

Guenn shrugged her shoulders and made a disdainful face.

"Or Monsieur Douglas, either, though he is as solemn as a stone image in the graveyard. Or Monsieur Staunton, even if he does act as if his model was a bit of the shore or a clump of heather; and it's a wonder to me that he looks at us enough to paint us, for he never seems to see us at all. But, Guenn, if you would come and pose, you would understand. You are cleverer than the rest of us, you know. It would n't take you long to find them out: only, you don't come, and so you never understand that messieurs les artistes are — different," Jeanne concluded with a somewhat troubled look.

"Little fool that you are!" remarked Guenn, with, however, nothing offensive in her tone or expression. In Plouvenec there were in common use so many terms stronger than fool, that this often meant only affection and endearment.

"Well, I do wish you'd come with me, and that's the truth. Why are you always so cross when I t

you about the atelier? You would like it yourself. I don't see why you grow so cross. Then the way you talk about men! Isn't Alain a man? Don't you like Alain?"

"Yes," said Guenn, smiling frankly, "of course I like Alain. I like to dance with Alain. Ma foi, how we danced at the Beûzec Pardon!" And she hummed the gavotte.

"Once I heard you say that you were *glorieuse* of our Plouvenec sailors, that you wished you were a sailor in a storm," Jeanne went on reproachfully.

"But a sailor in a storm at sea, and a sailor drunk on shore — ah, Jeanne! Then, I said it last week, and yesterday is not to-day." Guenn laughed perversely. "To-day I hate all men except three," counting on her fingers: "Thymert, because he is an angel; Monsieur Louis, because he is good to Thymert; Alain, because he dances the gavotte like the wind, — like the southwest wind!" and she hummed and danced in gay remembrance, — her hands on her hips, smiling brightly.

"And I tell you, Guenn, that Monsieur Hamor is so amiable that" — Guenn put her hands over her ears, singing as loud as she could, —

"Ah, mon dieu, que la vie est amè-re,"

thereby shutting out the rest of Jeanne's unwelcome remark, with the exception of certain disjointed words like *kerchiefs* — *coiffe* — *bonbons*, which plainly told the oft-repeated story.

Guenn turned fiercely.

"Tu m'ennuies, I tell you! Will you never stop?" She looked angrily at Jeanne, who in her turn was somewhat sullen. Then Guenn laughed. "Little fool.

How stupid you are! But I like you all the same. Voyons," she began impressively, "let us be reasonable. I am tired of your Monsieur Hamor, — don't you see, my little Jeanne? He wearies me. Can't you understand?" drooping her eyelids like a languid marquise. "He is of as much importance as" — she paused to find an object sufficiently mean to express Monsieur Hamor's insignificance, suddenly threw her right foot surprisingly far forward, pointing at it with a disdainful finger — "as my old sabots! There, my little Jeanne!" With a fine air of indifference she folded her arms across her breast, and stood smiling at her friend.

This was unanswerable. Jeanne had a confused impression that Guenn had been saying very strange things, but Guenn always said strange things; and as for trying to persuade her when she did not choose to be persuaded, — well, one might as well ask the digue to dance a gavotte. Jeanne did not pretend to be very clever, but she knew that when Guenn Rodellec hated anybody, as she hated this amiable Monsieur Hamor, enough had been said for one day. There was danger in pursuing a subject which Guenn had closed in this lofty manner. Smiling superbly, the scorned sabot — emblem of baseness — still extended as far as she could reach, Guenn calmly waited until Jeanne should relapse into her usual state of blind loyalty, from which only the influence of the hated stranger could ever have led this sweet-tempered and willing subject. Jeanne raised her eyebrows, shrugged her shoulders, dropped both arms, and said nothing. Guenn accepted the pantomime of submission.

She was masterful, but generous. "Come," she said graciously, "let us go down to the wall with the others.

Let us amuse ourselves. There's Mother Nives in no end of a temper, and Victoria's got a new coiffe."

"What strong eyes you have," said her vassal admiringly.

"Yes, thanks to the bon dieu," was Guenn's pious and satisfied rejoinder; "they are very good eyes to see with. Let us race to the wall. Jeanne, wait. Start fair — one, two, three!"





CHAPTER VII.

“**PASSEUR!**” called Hamor, standing by the ferry-way, where no boat appeared. “**Passeur!**” he cried again impatiently, looking up and down the shore. The water plashed against the steps hewn in the solid rock. Opposite, by the low walls and towers on the island, pale-blue nets, light as air, stirred in the breeze. Hamor put down with some emphasis his easel, camp-stool, palette, and unsatisfactory sketch, and shouted with the whole force of his excellent lungs, “**Passeur!**” From a curve in the shore just below, a broad scow came slowly into view, but no gray-bearded ferryman stood in the stern. A girl with a white coiffe, a red kerchief, a lightly swaying figure, brought the boat well up to the steps, and waited sullenly while Hamor collected his belongings and stepped in.

“Ah, mon dieu, que la vie est —”

What life was, in her opinion, she had not deigned to communicate. The moment she saw Hamor she stopped short in her gay song.

"Guenn Rodellec, by all that's lucky! Here's my chance!"

He accosted her civilly enough but indifferently, seating himself, and examining his sketch with an absorbed air. Now there was nothing whatever of interest to him in that sketch. He had fully made up his mind about it, and in all probability would paint over it the next day. Like Sir Joshua Reynolds, he could often say, selling a painting: "There are six pictures on that canvas, some better, some worse than the one you see."

He had been working five hours, studying an effect of sand and sterile grass, which he wished to produce in a large composition. His sketch, in itself, he considered a failure, but as a study it was useful. He had learned something to avoid. Hamor was tired, and not in his most agreeable mood. The boy who should have carried his effects had disappointed him. His sketch was unsatisfactory, and sand and sun had made his eyes ache. Waiting for the passeur had also not had a soothing influence. But seeing Guenn Rodellec tête-à-tête with him, sculling his boat, he forgot all his vexations, and gloried in his good fortune.

Guenn's sole response to his greeting was a stare and a scowl. Hamor continued to regard his sketch assiduously.

"Where's the passeur?" he at length demanded abruptly, as if not wholly content with the present arrangement.

"Drunk," was the laconic answer.

"What, drunker?" said Hamor, with a smile.

No reply.

"But he's a very good fellow, the old passeur."

Still utter silence. Evidently light conversation was

not acceptable to his companion. She sculled easily, with a practised hand. Her cheeks glowed with a fresh-rose brightness. Her eyes were full of light and life. Dark veins around them cast a deep violet shade, and made them look even larger than they were. Her beautiful, defiant face, her rich color, and every lovely line of her figure in its free motions, gave Hamor exquisite pleasure. He would have liked nothing better than to have this charming angry little person continue for hours to scull him across and up and down those pleasant waters, scowling and flushing and throwing herself into the most bewitching poses. But there rose the island ramparts, and directly her forced voyage would be over. He had already lost much time. She was working fast, the pauses had been long, and as yet he had made no headway.

"Did they come for you because the passeur could not row?"

"Yes."

"And you are always ready to do a stupid man's work for him, when he can't do it himself?"

"No."

Hamor did not venture to smile in the presence of so much savage dignity. Truly, she was a most difficult person to *aborder*. When she spoke, she lifted her eyes and looked straight into his; then ignored his presence completely. Thus far he had succeeded in extracting three monosyllables from her compressed lips. This would never do.

"Guenn," he said very gently.

She lifted her eyes with a startled look. Until to-day he had never actually spoken to her since the few words on the beach that first evening. Now his tone was suggestive of old acquaintance, of perfect understanding.

No one in the world had ever said *Guenn* like that. He was smiling, too, — the smile she knew so well.

"Guenn," he repeated, "let us be sensible. Why should you and I quarrel? You know I want you to pose for me. Will you not come, Guenn? I will give you fifty francs a month, and Jeanne has already told you I don't make it too hard work."

"No!" she cried vehemently, turning her back upon him.

"And why not?" he continued in the same kind tone.

"Because I won't."

"Ah! That's a very good reason. It's settled then, I suppose." After a moment: "But, in spite of your insurmountable objections to coming yourself, would you mind asking your little brother to come and see me some time?"

"What do you want of my Nannic?" The girl wheeled, and looked at him angrily.

"I don't know yet," Hamor said with his pleasant intonation, as if unconscious of her suspicion and wrath. "Possibly not much of anything. I only thought I'd like him to come in. He seems to be a nice boy. I like children. They like me usually."

Guenn scanned him sharply. He was looking beyond her, at the walls and the boats which they were approaching, — leaning back easily, a harmless, amiable smile on his handsome face.

"Nannic is a very nice boy," the young girl said, with a mixture of timidity and audacity.

"So I have thought."

"He knows more than other boys," — always watching Hamor, who bore the scrutiny unmoved, steadily wearing the same look of smiling unconscious benevolence, — "he knows things beforehand."

"Ah," murmured Hamor appreciatively.

Guenn nodded gravely, and seemed lost in contemplation of her brother's genius. "If he won't come, he won't," she announced at length.

Hamor was on the point of saying, "That seems to be a family trait;" but he feared to rouse the sleeping lion, and prudently replied: "I should be sorry if he would n't come. I have always hoped that he would."

Guenn looked at him with grave comprehension.

"Would he be afraid to come, do you think?" Hamor asked.

Guenn leaned on her great oar and stared at him with her charming blue eyes. "Afraid? Nannic Rodellec afraid?"

She threw back her head, and laughed the most delicious laugh Hamor had ever heard. "Nannic afraid? O mon dieu! O mon dieu!" Again came her free laughter, — wild, sweet, irresistible.

So few people — children excepted — laugh well when they laugh heartily. A suggestion of latent coarseness or latent weakness seems to spring from parted lips, like the frog from the girl's mouth in the fairy-tale. Hamor had been so ungallant as to privately make this observation in the presence of charming women. "Why, this is a fine laugh," he thought, and listened critically as to an upper *C*, — "a perfectly fine laugh." It was pure mirth and pure music. It gave him a positive pleasure. He found himself laughing with her.

"Well, are you laughing at me, Guenn?" he said indulgently. He had reason to repent of his fatuity. Her face sobered instantly, as her thoughts reverted from Nannic to the painter. Something was wrong. Had he seemed too intimate? Was it because he had laughed too?

"No," she answered, with the familiar scowl, "I don't know you."

"And in Plouvenec does one have to know a person before one laughs at him? Is that Breton manners? I must say I think it's very good manners," he remarked quite inoffensively.

The color flamed up in her face, and her voice vibrated with anger.

"It's manners in Bretagne to mind your own business, and not to go round making fun of folks that do the best they can to keep out of your way." With a splendid movement she swung the boat against the smooth, worn rocks, and stood waiting for Hamor to step out.

He seated himself still more comfortably, and watched her closely. No one was in their neighborhood except a small and nearly bare boy, who frantically offered to dive for a sou, or perform any other natatory feat which monsieur would find agreeable. "Swim across to the other shore, and from there down to the great ship, and I'll give you ten sons. See, I will put it here," and he deposited fifty centimes in a crevice of the rock. "And mind it is fine swimming that I want, not fast swimming. You can stop and float by the way, if you like. Allez!" *Splash* went the boy.

"She's in my clutches now fast enough," he reflected cruelly. "She can't leave the boat, and she can't very well put me out." He sat still until she turned her head impatiently and looked at him over her shoulder. Their eyes met.

"Voyons, Guenn," he said gravely. "This is the second time that you have made that not too amiable remark to me."

"And what is it to you whether I am amiable or

not?" she demanded, — facing him, since the encounter was unavoidable, with a desperate courage. "*Amiable?* What is amiable? And are you my confessor? Who are you, any way?" she said violently. "To me, you are nothing and nobody!" A gallant charge, thought Hamor.

"I cannot deny that there is a certain justice in what you say, Guenn," he began with much gentleness. "You are at home. I am the intruder. You ask me who I am. I am only a painter, with no interest beyond my art. I go wherever it leads me. I do whatever it bids me. I care for nothing else. I may be personally disagreeable to you. As you say, that is your affair. Certainly I claim no right to criticise your manners or your temper. But on the other hand, how have I ever injured you? Tell me, Guenn, what have I done? Have I sought you, followed you, troubled you by word or look? Have I ever spoken to you, except that first time and to-day? And was it my fault that the women were teasing you on the beach? Is it my fault that I have eyes, and that I saw your beautiful hair? Is it my fault that the passeur is drunk? Come, come, Guenn, be sage. *Songez donc.* — Why is not Jeanne here to-day? Why is it you? Surely, I am not responsible."

"Why is it me?" repeated Guenn slowly.

"Now this is an intelligent girl," thought Hamor. "You can appeal to her sense and frankness. She's a hard little thing, but she's fond of her brother. That's where she's vulnerable. I have never, to my knowledge, given myself so much trouble for any model. And as for talking reason to them — bah! they are too bêtes. But this child is made of different material."

He had taken his sketch-book from his pocket.

Guenn stood, slowly rocking the boat. He was trying to catch the pretty swaying motion of her waist and hips. "What a creature! All grace and fire! I will paint her so, — life-size, in this old scow, leaning on the oar larger than herself; the granite walls, one of these fishing-boats, the cloudy nets along the masts, the steps cut in the rock, slimy and wet; the girl looking straight before her into your eyes."

Hamor had an unusually agreeable voice, which often seemed to be curiously independent of his mental condition. It was cordial and winning, when his soul was weary and indifferent. It possessed tender modulations, of which it made liberal use to all women, the worthy and the unworthy, the just and the unjust. He gave no heed to the final consequences of tones, which another man might use once in a lifetime, and to one only.

"Guenn," he said, slipping his book into his pocket, having half caught the pose he liked, and filled in his cabalistic scratches for walls, drooping foliage, masts, nets, and atmosphere, "have you nothing to say to me? I am sure you have courage enough to say anything. Tell me honestly, what have I done? Why are you angry?"

"I wish you would go away to the end of the world and never come back again, and that's what I have to say to you." Her voice trembled with passion.

"Well, I shall some time," he said consolingly.

"I wish you would go now."

"Why, Guenn?"

She flung her arms up with a little desperate movement and let them fall.

"Because they all like you," she cried. "Jeanne likes you. Monsieur Morot likes you. Mother Quaper

likes you. Madame at the Voyageurs, and the carpenter, and the locksmith, and the sailors — ”

“ And the goodly fellowship of the prophets and the noble army of martyrs,” Hamor murmured irreverently in English, to complete the roll-call.

“ What is it?” she asked suspiciously.

“ Oh, nothing, — only you gratify me. I was not aware of my popularity. Is there anybody else?”

“ Yes, there is,” she said sullenly, hesitating.

“ What possesses the girl? Can it be a general objection to hearing Aristides called the Just? This is really amusing.”

“ Well?” he said gently.

“ Monsieur le recteur des Lannions, and my Nannic, — my Nannic,” she repeated with a strange distress in her voice and eyes.

“ Now I am glad to know that,” Hamor returned cordially. “ I know the curé. I admire him immensely. I consider him an extraordinary man. And your brother, as I have already said,” he added gravely, “ is, I imagine, an extraordinary boy. And how does he happen to know me, — your Nannic?”

“ Oh, he knows you,” she muttered; “ he knows everybody. He knows everything.”

“ Tant mieux. And so all these good people like me?”

“ That’s what I said.” She moved the great oar uneasily to and fro and looked down into the water with troubled eyes.

“ Do you like them?”

“ Yes. They are my people. I love my people,” she answered very gently.

Hamor thought this was charmingly said.

“ Now, shall I tell you who does not like me? Old Mother Nives — ”

Guenn looked interested and nodded assent.

"And your father and you."

She started violently, giving him a glance of angry reproach. Guenn never mentioned her father's name. No one knew how she felt towards him.

Hamor went on unconsciously, in the kindest voice: "You'd better come over to the other side, Guenn. The company, in the first place, is more suited to you. Then there is another reason. I like you. I shall always like you. It is n't exactly fair to be so severe with me. Think about it, will you not?" he said, laughing a little. He rose and stood near her. If it had been Jeanne, and Jeanne was a good little girl, he would have patted her shoulder. But at that moment he no more presumed to lay a familiar finger on Guenn Rodellec than on the grandest grande dame of his acquaintance. In her patched skirts and wooden shoes, her small coarse hands nervously working the ferryman's heavy oar, her heart fluttering like a frightened bird's, her eyes dilating as she raised them to his handsome face, Guenn was unapproachable.

"How near he is! How tall he is! How he smiles and smiles!" thought the girl. She turned her head desperately. There was no escape.

"Will you go?" she said harshly.

"Oh, yes! I am going now." He dropped the pennies for the passeur into her hand. "I must go, in fact, if I hope to escape before Leander comes back. I see he is pointing this way. He'll shake himself like a Newfoundland dog, and he'll want some more sous. I have n't any more, Guenn."

"That boy's name is Kadoc," Guenn said gloomily.

Hamor smiled at her as if he loved her, she was so pretty. He laid his hands on the oar. They were

long, well-shaped hands with narrow nails. Guenn's nails were stubbed and broken and gray. She was too proud and too simple to withdraw her hands, but she saw the difference. Wild little Breton fisher-girl as she was, she was yet a woman. Never in her life before had she been ashamed or even aware of any deficiency in her toilette. Now, as she looked, she was uncomfortable.

Hamor for his part was thinking: "Well, it's all a matter of habit. The ugliest woman can take care of her hands, and a fool can wield a nail-brush. But who can teach a girl to stand as this girl stands — to look as she does?"

"It is very heavy," he said; "I wonder that you can manage it, you are so small and light."

"I prefer to be small," she returned haughtily, as if her size were a thing she had personally arranged with the powers of nature. "Big women are ugly."

"They are, sometimes," Hamor said gravely.

She was looking steadily down on the four hands, side by side on the great oar.

Still he did not go. Still she felt him near. It seemed to her no one had ever been so near her.

"Good-by, Guenn. Don't forget to ask Nannic to come to my studio. You will come too, perhaps?"

"No, I won't!" she exclaimed hotly.

"By the way, why do you suppose I want you to pose for me?"

Guenn had the courage of her convictions.

"Because I am pretty," she answered.

"Exactly," Hamor returned rather meekly. "I was not aware that you knew it."

"Why should I not?" the girl rejoined indifferently.

"Everybody says I am the prettiest girl in Plouvenec."

"And you think so yourself?" He could not resist investigating this new phase of maidenly unconsciousness. For unconscious she seemed, in spite of her words.

"Well, yes —" and Guenn honestly considered the subject. "Annaïc was the prettiest, but she's gone off."

"And what made Annaïc go off?" asked Hamor sympathetically, somewhat in doubt as to whether the person in question had emigrated to America, or simply faded in comeliness.

"Children," said Guenn bluntly.

"Ah!" Hamor was extremely amused.

"Children," resumed Guenn with a philosophical air, "make you go off as soon as anything. Still some people are born to be pretty, and pretty they will be whatever happens. Annaïc will come up again," — she smiled with evident satisfaction, showing all her square white little teeth, — "Oh yes, surely!"

Hamor was well pleased with his interview. The girl had her prejudices still, no doubt. But she had certainly grown more accustomed to him. She had volunteered bits of information. She had not hesitated to express her opinions. She had stood near him all this time, both swinging the same oar. He must be content.

"Guenn," he said in the tone that made her feel so strangely, "I must really go now. Leander Kadoc is almost here."

He observed that she was of an enthusiastic nature and had lost herself in the subject of Annaïc's charms. Now she was studying his hands curiously.

"You don't like me yet?"

Ah, how near he was with his beautiful smiling face! She longed to scream or run away. When he said *Guenn*, like that, she had no more strength.

"I hate you!"

"Still? Never mind. Some day, when you pose for me you will like me very much. You will pose so uncommonly well, Guenn."

He almost laid his firm long hand on hers, but this seemed to him, upon the whole, unwise. He slowly gathered together his belongings. When he painted her he must be careful of that violet tone under her eyes. Peach-black might do.

"Good-by, Guenn." He walked up the rocky way a few steps, then turned and nodded to her kindly as if there were a perfect understanding between them. She was looking back.

"Passeur" came faintly from the opposite shore. A couple of impatient artists waited long, while Guenn sculled wearily across.

There were hot tears in her eyes, and a strange heaviness on her heart. Wherever she looked, she saw his face. "Guenn!" said the caressing voice.

She turned her head involuntarily. Already a long stretch of water lay between her and the shore. She saw only the slimy steps of the ferry-way, the boats on either side with the slowly waving nets, the heavy walls behind the narrow gateway opening upon the one street that led across the island between the high old houses. He was gone. He had reached the other gateway and the drawbridge perhaps. He was smiling at the children playing games on the common. If she need not see his smile! If she need not hear his voice! "Guenn!" it murmured with its lingering tone.

She stamped her foot, and sculled with all her strength. "I hate him!" she said, brushing the tears roughly from her eyes.

CHAPTER VIII.



MEANWHILE Hamor had by no means forgotten the curé of the Lannions. While utilizing the baser material that lay near him, the carpenter, the tired little woman in the window, and the various models who clattered up and down the stairway between him and his friends, — as he said, like Jacob's angels in sabots, — his fancy saw a great picture growing under his eager hand, and Thymert's remarkable presence inspiring his noblest effort. He had embodied his idea in half a dozen ébauches, and his restless imagination had thrown the unconscious priest into a score of striking compositions, none of which even in embryo satisfied him. "I must study the man," he thought, "live with him, have him for my daily bread. If I could paint him as he looked that night in the crowd of roughs, strong and imperious, with the lantern-light shining on him, — but that does not paint itself easily."

In his secret soul, he felt it to be an injustice that the world was not chartered outright to the guild of

painters. Why need artists experience delay or embarrassment in the mere assembling of their animate or inanimate tools? Now if he could, without more ado, kidnap Guenn Rodellec and command Thymert to present himself? He would have them both in time. He had discovered them. They belonged to him. It was his immovable intention to perpetuate them on canvas. But he objected to the slow and cautious approach which he nevertheless recognized as an imperative condition of success. However, amiability would be apt to win, and Hamor knew that he was nothing if not amiable. He undertook, then, to pay his promised visit to the Lannions. Late one Saturday night, he suggested it to his friends. Staunton and Douglas agreed to accompany him. They would start early, they said, and make a day of it.

It was, in fact, very early the next morning as the two young men stood by the wet parapet, waiting for Hamor. The mists had not yet lifted, and the quay and boats and atmosphere seemed fairly dripping with moisture. A few sailors hung about, sleep still lingering in their heavy limbs. Through the fog the masts looked like a spectral forest.

Hamor was a person who frequently allowed his friends to wait for him, and when their patience was nearly exhausted, he would finally appear in an imperturbable good-humor which incensed them more deeply. He had so many kind things to say to people to whom he was utterly indifferent; he stopped so often on the way, to give a caress to a child, and a glance that was no less a caress to its mother, or to make a remark full of bonhommie and grace to the most sullen old rascal on the village streets, — that his friends had occasion to regret his exceeding popularity.

This morning, after telling Staunton and Douglas that he would be along directly, he had run over to his studio for his sketch-book. The tired little woman had descended from her window, and as he came through the great arch, she stood by the stairway leading up to her habitation, a modest picture of appealing femininity, wrapped in an old green shawl. He was not the man to refuse her the comfort of a morning chat. The conversation on her part grew historical and confidently genealogical. It took root in Quimper and spread its branches liberally over other towns. Hamor listening to her, his kind face bent down slightly, speaking now and then in his gentlest tone, was technically observant of the sudden resurrection of youth in her faded cheeks and dull eyes. This degree of juvenility might be expressed with rose madder, he decided.

Meanwhile Staunton and Douglas paced up and down the quay, from the common to the digue, from the digue to the common, their coats snugly buttoned across their chests, their collars turned up to their ears, their hands in their trousers pockets. Perhaps the October air on the pleasant Breton coast had not the bitter chill which these precautions seemed to imply; but, when we make unnecessary sacrifices for our friends, we like our friends to know it. Douglas wore knickerbockers and a blouse with admirable gravity. Other men in this juvenile costume look as if they had assumed it simply for their temporary convenience. But Douglas's long thin legs were humorously childlike, and his whole figure was suggestive of a baby-giant, or of a being capable of immeasurable elongation, if cleverly pulled out.

The young men were extremely taciturn. After the twentieth silent round, Staunton, with somewhat less

than his usual affability, remarked: "Well, I like this!" To which Douglas responded nothing.

After the twenty-fifth round, Staunton said: "We might get a boat—eh?" To which Douglas replied doubtfully: "H'm."

After the thirtieth round, Staunton announced: "I say, Douglas, I'm going to look up a boat."

"He thinks he knows more about boats than the whole admiralty. He may have a choice,"—suggested the Scotchman doubtfully.

"Well, he said nothing of any particular boat or man last night."

"If he does n't like our choice, so much the worse for him. He ought to be here. Suppose we take the next best man we find."

In the gloom, as if sent by fate, a pair of burly shoulders loomed up directly in their path.

"Let us take this broad-back, if he has a boat;" and Staunton with his fine French and reserved manner accosted the figure.

The man turned and looked at them. He had an unusually fresh skin for his age, and hard blue eyes. It was Hervé Rodellec, in an interval of sobriety, as capable of sailing his boat and making a good speculation out of the strangers, as any man on the bay.

"Ah, Rodellec!" began Staunton a little stiffly, "we are looking for a boat. We want to go over to the Lannions. Could you—ah—is your boat—ah?"

"Come and see for yourselves, gentlemen," Rodellec smiled and showed two rows of perfect teeth. "She is just below. If there's a prettier craft in Plouvenec, I'll eat my sabots."

"Directly," returned the Englishman. "We are

waiting for a friend. What are your terms, Rodellec? We want the boat for the day, you know."

"No more and no less than usual," Rodellec answered with jovial ambiguity, "and for *pour boire*, whatever the gentlemen feel like giving, of course. There are three of us and the *mousse*," he threw in lightly. "Ah yes, *monsieur* can rely upon having things on the square with Hervé Rodellec. A franc Breton likes everything above-board. As for the Lannions, I am a cousin of the Lannions so to speak, — *monsieur le recteur* being cousin to my sainted wife, — God rest her soul," — crossing himself. "The *recteur* and I are the best of friends. Oh, yes! I'm your man for the Lannions: nobody better indeed," — and he rubbed his hands together with a cordial and trusting air, and smiled, and pushed his *béret* farther back on his flowing hair.

It is a curious fact that burly rascals with rosy baby-skins win more confidence, from the world at large, than their pale and melancholy brothers. Florid immorality that punches you vulgarly in the ribs, and reveals to you secrets that should be sacred to a fiend, seems less reprehensible than vice brooding alone in the corner, respecting, in a certain sense, its dignity and your own. Familiarity, through some perverted reasoning, often has the effect of ingenuousness. A loud laugh is reassuring, while the quiet smile of an honorable man may suggest an undermining policy. In short, self-control implies mind. Mind is dangerous. Welcome, then, to childish volubility and ignorance. In them there is surely no harm. So, from Cæsar down, we fear the "lean and hungry look." Yet, is not cruelty robust as well as pallid, and is any villain so hopelessly soulless as the strong blond animal possessed of a sanguine temperament, a

perfect circulation, and a conscience intact? He has no remorse, no uneasy morbid reveries, and the most subtle expert can detect in him no predisposition to insanity. He can betray his friend without losing his appetite for his mutton-chop, beat his wife half dead and sleep the dreamless sleep of an infant. The next day he has his jokes, his frank ways, his ready tears, his confidences, and the world says: "He is a good fellow, a little hasty and thoughtless,—who of us indeed is perfect? but there is no real harm in him."

"This is n't a bad one," Staunton said approvingly. "Suppose we let him make his terms clearer, and take him for better for worse."

At that moment Hamor, with a cheerful face and long strides, appeared. He called once, was answered, and came straight to the group.

"Ah, here you are," he said blithely. "I'm a little late, you see. I was detained. What on earth are you doing with that old prize-fighter?" giving Rodellec at the same time a most friendly nod. "Meurice," he shouted energetically. "Here, you fellows there on the wall, won't some of you have the kindness to see if Monsieur Meurice is n't somewhere about—? Look along the other landing—" Then, to his friends, "Meurice is our man, you know."

It was surprising how much life Hamor infused into the lifeless morning. The sailor-boys ran to do his bidding. Others whom he knew came up. Men emerged from the fog; and where he stood, with his animated face and ready word of greeting, the air seemed drier and warmer, the world more awake.

Hamor admired the Plouvenec sailors, and had a singularly happy way with them. He liked to loiter about the quay and the digue when the boats were in, and chat

with the men. He had had occasion to lend them a helping hand, which he did with an air of knowing the ropes. He asked them intelligent questions about the coasts and the fishing, and in return gave them interesting information about his own country.

At first they had eyed him askance, as is their habit, but a man who knew so much about boats was not to be scorned like a clumsy land-lubber. Then he never forgot a name or a face, — a gift of the gods as invaluable in a fishing village as at court. In the presence of a rough but sympathetic crowd, he had once extracted a fish-hook rather cleverly from a child's thumb, and had not hesitated to aid an old woman's slippery efforts to rearrange a basket of overturned eels. These two acts of easy benevolence had won for him a prodigious reputation for heart. He had a handsome patrician face, and they liked him none the less for that. He wore a *béret* and *sabots*, — which indeed most of the artists wore who might find it expedient to work all day long in a marsh with their feet reposing in a pool, — but he wore his *béret* down among their *bérets*, his *sabots* down among their *sabots*, and often nights, along the parapet, his voice would join their choruses in a hearty joyous fashion, which even without his responsive smile was surely sufficient to inspire perfect confidence.

His friends had been regaled with frequent bursts of eloquence in regard to the Breton seaman, who he declared was the finest fellow in the world. Hamor was prone to the use of the superlative. The last pretty girl he saw was apt, for a couple of days, to be the most beautiful girl he had ever seen in his life. The last interesting book was the best book he ever read. "And I tell you what," he would say with a vast amount of enthusiasm, "they have the very finest

possible manners, for men of their class. Not that I recognize class distinction as you do, Staunton. Class is an accident of no account: I use the word only as a matter of conversational convenience."

"My dear fellow, we all know that you are a Nihilist," Staunton would retort mildly.

"No, I am only an American. But just observe these sailors; independent and perfectly courteous, respectful without being obsequious. They have a fine reserve. They can give a joke and take one without growing familiar. Can you produce anything better? Can a duke do more?" he would demand sternly.

"Oh, I dare say not," Staunton would reply, laughing with amiable indifference.

Now Hamor stood in the centre of a friendly and admiring group. Staunton watched him a few moments with a humorous sense of his own unimportance. Rodellec was watching too, with however nothing of a humorous nature on his dogged face. At length Staunton said in gentle remonstrance:—

"But, Hamor, I've already spoken to this man, don't you know?"

"Oh, never mind! Give him a *pour-boire*. Meurice is a famous fellow. You'll like Meurice. Then, I have already told him I should want him to take me over to the Lannions. So he is half-engaged, you see."

"Well, my man is just about half-engaged too," Staunton said with a smile.

"We might procure a fleet to transport us," drawled Douglas, his hands behind him, his feet planted firmly and far apart, in the compass-attitude he was apt to assume for enjoyable listening. "Perhaps I'd better hurry and get still another ancient mariner."

"Do; and hurry by all means. Hurry as only you

and the little busy snail understand the word," began Hamor pleasantly. "Ah, here's my man," raising his *béret* in response to the greeting of a tall, fine-looking sailor, whose manner deserved all the encomiums Hamor had bestowed upon the fraternity, and whose smile was as cordial as Hamor's own.

"I'm lucky to find you, patron," said the young man heartily. "I ought perhaps to have seen you last night, but it was late when we made our plans, you know." This little explanation was frankly directed to the whole group, who seemed to find it highly satisfactory, and in fact to redound in some way to Monsieur Hamor's credit. "And now the question is, Is it a good day for the Lannions, and can you take my friends and me over?"

"It's going to be a good day on sea, monsieur. The fog is beginning to lift, and the boat is always ready for you when you are ready for her, only she does smell a bit strong of the fish of yesterday, and no denying, monsieur."

As he spoke, Rodellec came behind him and muttered something in Breton over his shoulder. "What is that to me?" returned Meurice quickly, with a shrug. Rodellec continued in a low surly tone.

"Come, come," said Hamor briskly. "We must be off; eh, patron? Let us not waste our time. Sans rancune, Rodellec."

Rodellec faced him squarely.

"It's the second time you've meddled with me. You'd better let me alone. You'd better take care. You'd better —"

"Such a bagatelle," returned Hamor, with easy good-humor. "You'd better be quiet, Rodellec. How can you make a row so early in the morning?"

The sailors laughed. Who could be angry with this sunny-faced gars? Evidently only Hervé Rodellec, who sullenly turned away. Staunton, with some contrition, slipped into his hand a peace-offering. Rodellec's fingers closed over it with lofty unconsciousness. "Damn him!" he ejaculated, by way of distant acknowledgment.

"I would n't swear at a man's friend in a man's face," observed Staunton gravely. "It's very bad taste;" but for some reason his sympathies were entirely with the discomfited Breton. The civil young Englishman's mention of taste fell on dull ears; still, Rodellec seemed to consider it worth while to answer:

"I have n't any grudge against you, monsieur."

"Well, I am glad of that. Don't have any grudge against anybody, and we'll take a sail in your boat some day."

Rodellec gave a pull at his *béret*, and walked off a few steps. The laughter of his comrades sounded still in his ears. Hamor had again pleased the crowd, and turned the joke against him. His jealous vanity filled him with discomfort. "Laugh, you grinning young fool! It will be my turn some day;" and he stood watching the painter, who was bestowing cigarettes upon ecstatic sailor-boys.

As the young man followed Meurice to the other landing, Hamor, in excellent spirits, exclaimed: "Handsome fellow! Powerful fellow! I like his angry eyes, and his patriarchal hair, and his beastly temper. Upon my word, little Guenn looks like him, and seems to have inherited a fair share of the paternal temperament," he added, laughing. "I must get that man to pose for me some day."

"Pose for you!" It was Douglas who spoke. He had not opened his lips or changed his attitude during

the whole conversation after Meurice arrived. Now he was gravely stalking along as usual, neither in line nor in step with the others. Douglas might be deficient in humor, as Hamor often said; he might fail in the apprehension of subtle allusions; but he was capable of accepting the plain evidence of facts. It seemed to him, curiously enough, at this moment, that Hamor was not.

"Pose for you!" he repeated. "Is it possible that you don't perceive that the man hates you? I must say, I'm glad of it myself. It's good for you, you know, Hamor. But there's not a shadow of a doubt. Rodellec hates you with a good, solid, black hate."

Hamor smiled. "Nonsense! Nobody hates nowadays." He blew a smoke ring into the heavy atmosphere, and watched its ephemeral existence with interest.

"I honestly believe," said Staunton, looking straight before him, "that Hamor is utterly devoid of principles or susceptibilities where a model is concerned. He would not hesitate to ask anybody to pose for him,—his brother's murderer, or the man that had run away with his wife."

Hamor turned and stared. It was rare to hear a pronounced opinion from Staunton. Then, extravagant as was his hypothesis, he spoke with an air of intimate conviction.

"Well," said Hamor after a long pause, speaking with slow emphasis, "if I could make a good picture of them,—why not?"

The young men walked on in silence. There seemed to be an awkward break in their intercourse. Hamor cared for the approval of his friends. He glanced from one to the other inquiringly.

"What's the matter, old fellow?" he asked at length,

putting his hand in a boyish fashion on Staunton's shoulder. He looked like a boy this morning with his *béret* pushed back from his bright face. "Has your native fog clouded your spirits, or is it turning out so early?"

"Never mind, Hamor. It's all right, you know," Staunton said with a touch of embarrassment. "At least, it is my own fault."

"Oh, I don't mind," Hamor replied magnanimously.

It was now Staunton's turn to stare. Then he smiled, and said softly, in his usual manner:

"You see one phenomenon gives birth to another. How do I know but that I should always tell the truth at six o'clock in the morning? I shall sleep through the dangerous moment hereafter."

"As heretofore," Douglas's deep bass concluded like a strong organ-chord.

Meurice's boat fortunately now claimed their attention.

"She does smell a bit strong," Hamor said with a little laugh. "But why should n't she smell like a fish? She is a fish. Wait till you see her swim, — eh, patron?"

Meurice tried to look indifferent, but the corners of his mouth twitched drolly. As he wore his beard stowed away well under his chin, no concealment was possible. The betraying feature, surrounded by a blue and bristly expanse, knew how to set hard in the face of danger, but was now revealing its tender weaknesses. When they praised his boat or his little daughter, his heart bounded with joy. He put up his rough hand with an awkward motion, and coughed; but he could not cough the pleasure out of his eyes.

"She might be worse, — she might be worse," he began shyly; then, after a cautious look at each of the

three strangers, he seemed to gain confidence, and went on with less reserve :

"She's the best boat on this bay. I don't say she is as handsome as Monsieur Louis's, and I don't say she can sail any faster, though as to that I have my opinion. But if Monsieur Louis married a wife, he'd want a different kind of a wife from my wife ; and that's what I do say ; and she'd wear more gimcracks now, would n't she? but she wouldn't be any the better woman for that, and she wouldn't suit me as well as my old girl. The fact is, messieurs," he continued, much flattered by the evident sympathy of his audience, "a woman and a boat are pretty much the same thing. You have to know them in fair weather and foul, or you need n't think you know them at all. Are you a jeune homme?" he suddenly asked Hamor, who was about to reply with the matter-of-fact statement of his age, when some instinct caused him to ask : "Do you mean am I an unmarried man?"

"Yes, that's what I say. Are you a jeune homme?" Hamor, admitted that they all three were still enjoying bachelor freedom.

"Then take my advice. Don't pretend to know them until you've sailed them in foul weather." The young men, already in the boat, gayly assured him that they would remember his words.

"Now, I know this one," and Meurice gave the mast a mighty blow, and embraced the little craft in one shrewd, quizzical look. "I know all her pretty wheedling ways, and all her tricks. She's got some pretty bad tricks. They all have. But I don't go telling any other man what they are, and I'm her master, and she knows it. No other man ever sailed her. If any other man should sail her, I would never sail her again!" and

Meurice swore a good round oath by the holy bones of St. Hervé of Plouvenec, and went up the landing in answer to a call.

"It is difficult to follow the thread of this discourse. Is the good man talking of his better-half or his boat?" asked Staunton, amused.

"Both, I imagine. Is n't he a character? I told you you'd like Meurice," Hamor answered.

It was a large open boat, lugger rig, freshly rubbed down, very wet, and redolent of the sardines of yesterday and many yesterdays. Two young sailors in blue Jerseys and red belts had pulled off their bérêts, and assumed, for a quarter of a minute, less lounging attitudes in the prow. The mousse, a wiry freckled boy of fourteen, who was devouring crêpes turned his back and made sure of another one of these delicacies before the presence of the strangers should deprive him of his joys. The remaining crêpes — broad buckwheat fritters of tough and elastic constitution — he then rolled up in a much-used brown paper and tossed under a seat, while, with successfully distended cheeks, he stared at his ease and listened to his patron's words of wisdom.

The young men now felt no great impatience to be off. There was something vastly enjoyable in the moment. The fog was lifting; the dense array of fishing-boats disclosed itself clearer and clearer; the voices and movements of the sailors grew more animated.

Meurice was coming and going briskly. With stiff shyness and a sudden ingratiating smile, he approached his guests: "The gentlemen would n't mind if I took these girls along?" pointing up the wharf. "It is only Nona and little Hélène and Marie. I promised them a sail over to the islands if I should go out to-day. They don't often get the chance. They will be *sages*. They

will not déranger the gentlemen. And it being a Sunday —" looking at Hamor.

"Why take them, by all means. Of course they will not disturb us. And we know Nona. Good-morning, Nona. Good-morning, little Hélène. And the other is Marie?" — looking hard at the girl, — "You may be good; you certainly are not beautiful," he added gravely, in English. Staunton and Douglas also gave the shy rosy girls, in their Sunday coiffes and kerchiefs, a word of greeting, whereupon they all came down with an air of repressed excitement, and climbed, rather heavily, into the boat.

"Curious how badly these girls move, most of them," commented Hamor; "like cows, you know, quite."

Meurice, with a deprecating pull at his *béret*, again disappeared.

"Don't you suppose it's their skirts?" hazarded Staunton. "They wear such an abominable mass of folds on their hips. How can they walk decently? Who could?"

"Guenn Rodellec," replied Hamor, with decision.

"Well, she is a graceful little thing," Staunton admitted.

"She is the only perfectly graceful woman I ever saw," announced Hamor emphatically.

"Woman!" exclaimed Douglas. "Call her anything but a woman. She's a child, a will-o'-the-wisp, a boy. She can climb, run, jump, ride on a broom-stick for all I know. Whew, how she skims over the ground!"

"She's a beautiful woman, all the same," insisted Hamor. "Wait till you see her skimming, as you call it, up and down our Jacob's ladder."

"Ah, you still think you can get her?" Staunton said quietly.

"I have never doubted it an instant. And when I get her, I'll lend her to you."

"Oh, thanks!" Staunton turned away to watch the battlements rise from the rolling mists.

With Meurice now appeared two strangers whom the artists had often seen in the village streets, — a young Alsatian scientific man who was working in the Plouvenec vivier, and a professor of natural history from a college in the south of France. Much learning had made one of them hopelessly despondent, and the other a universal mocker. Both, however, promised to be amiable companions for a day. They, too, wished to go to the Lannions, and had engaged a man who left them in the lurch. Some one on the quay referred them to Meurice, who, in his turn, appealed to Hamor.

He expressed himself as charmed with the addition to his party, and did the honors of the old fishing-boat with grace. "Only," he added, "we must not let the patron go off again. We must rope him to the mast. He brings back a treasure-trove each time; but we are complete now. We are perfect. We can set sail, — eh, patron?" and he took his place at the helm with a "Will you trust me to steer her?"

"That I will, m'sieu'," Meurice said heartily. Then to the others, "M'sieu' Hamor is a born sailor. He could take a boat through the Raz. M'sieu' ought to have been a Breton."

The bare-footed mousse unfurled the jib, they pushed off, the sails filled, and the little boat, lightly cutting the waves, glided out from the long line of masts into broader waters, left the island-fortress in her wake, passed the great digue, rounded the point where the light-house stood, and soon was in the open bay, running along finely with the wind on the beam. The

long curves of the white beaches receded fast, with soft stretches of dune and meadow and noble woods reaching down towards the eager shining arms of the sea.

With every fresh tack the young men's faces revealed a deeper enjoyment. When men thoroughly enjoy boating, their burdens seem to vanish in foam, their cares to float off on the free winds, as soon as the sails are unfurled. Nowhere else did the droop of the Alsatian's melancholy nose and his sad and short-sighted eyes, blinking drearily behind his spectacles, so nearly withdraw their protest against the cosmic scheme, while the professor's mockery was modified into almost harmless jollity. He never sneered at a good sail-boat, a happy instance that the most inveterate scoffer may yet hold something sacred.

Nona and Marie grew steadily pinker in the stiff breeze. While they were not actually afraid, their faces wore a certain deeply surprised expression, and a lurch of the boat was apt to cause shrill ejaculations, and invocations to all the saints of Brittany, followed by subdued and embarrassed laughter. Little Hélène sat bolt upright and clutched the seat with both hands. Neither her attitude nor the look on her small round face indicated complete surrender of herself to the joys of her first sail, and it was possible that her pent-up emotions would vent themselves in wailing and tears the moment her little sabots touched the sands.

The two dark sailors chatted and joked with the girls. Meurice said little, but heard and saw much, turning his head slowly with a shrewd smile upon the sky, the sea, the company, and now and then giving a quick order to the mousse, who, in the intervals of tacking, unneeded and unnoticed, ate crêpes. The strangers, in

easy attitudes on kegs and coils of rope, talked or were silent as their mood suggested. A happy silence prevailed, and Meurice's boat showed only her "pretty wheedling ways."

Hamor swung his left arm round the tiller and began sketching the voracious mousse. The professor came nearer and watched the sketch grow. Hamor finished it and turned a leaf in his book. His eye fell upon his attempt to fix on paper Guenn Rodellec's beautiful action. He smiled, recalling the scene in the boat, then attentively studied his drawing.

"I shall be able to get it when I don't have to work like a thief in the night," he thought.

"Is your sketch-book only for the eye of genius, monsieur," began the professor politely; "or may an earth-born worm venture to —"

"Oh, you are welcome to examine it, if you have the patience," Hamor said affably; "but there's nothing in it interesting or even intelligible to anybody but myself. It's only a kind of note-book to aid my memory. It is full of the most fleeting impressions, you see." He turned the leaves slowly. "Here's a boy playing top. The boy is nothing; I only wanted his right leg. This is a cloud-effect over a church. These marks mean cobalt, and those, flake-white. These apparently delirious strokes represent a girl in a boat, with a certain background I wished to preserve. She's a *petit diable*, and I had to sketch her surreptitiously; it was the splendid swing of the waist that I tried to get. You will observe that I did not succeed; but 'Tomorrow is also a day.' Here's an old woman fishing on the digue. She's rather more discernible. But you should see my friend Staunton's sketches; they are finished works of art."

"I am very sorry ; I did n't bring my book," Staunton said, with a smile completely devoid of regret ; "I came for a rest."

"I never move without mine. How do I know when a great inspiration is going to seize me ; and there's more blind chance in Plouvenec than in most places," remarked Hamor, still thinking of Guenn. "Now look at us here in this boat. What brought us together? Could anything be more incongruous than we?"

"Could anything be more agreeable, sounds more civil," Staunton suggested.

"I don't imagine that the pilgrims who used to set sail from the Breton coasts in search of the blessed isle of Avalon were even as well assorted as we," drawled Douglas.

"But they never took anything along more seductive than butter," and the professor threw a wicked little glance towards the squarely built young women. "The old Breton monks and their tubs of fresh butter were inseparable. Ah, yes, their chants, their piety, and their butter!"

"And each told the story of his pious life," Hamor added. "What if we should tell our experiences?" looking rather maliciously at the little circle.

"Monsieur, you are imaginative and enthusiastic," said the Frenchman gravely. "It is admirable."

"In the first place, not one of us is honest enough," Douglas began with slow emphasis. "Of course," — with an explanatory wave of his long arm, — "I speak with absolute conviction only of my own party."

"I hope, at least, that there is not one of us who has n't more sense," Staunton said with his amiable smile.

"Oh, I proposed nothing at all!" Hamor protested.

"Personally I do not feel in the least communicative. It simply occurred to me we might be carrying a curious cargo of reminiscences."

"But it was a ghastly thought!" exclaimed the Alsatian, with a groan. "The lost illusions of five men, the horrible weight of their aggregate suffering, meanness, helplessness, blunders, and the dreary treadmill of their existence! It is enough to sink the boat."

"Ah, but my pessimism is less complete," Hamor said cheerfully. "I have relapses of it: it is not my chronic state."

"What am I more than that fish down there?" demanded the Alsatian wearily. "I may have a greater capacity for pain; but am I less helpless, less irresponsible than he? I am not."

"And yet I should have said, monsieur, that you were an able-bodied man," Douglas remarked commiseratingly.

The others laughed, and even the Alsatian faintly smiled, gazing with half-closed eyes upon the sky and sea. Then his Dantesque nose drooped sorrowfully, and he lay back in silent contemplation of the futility of existence and the martyrdom of man.

"I presume that I agree with my friend intellectually," laughed the professor; "but I don't find it worth while to take life so seriously."

"I don't think an artist can possibly find existence a treadmill," Staunton remarked in his mild way.

"I may be mean, I may be helpless," began Hamor energetically, "and it is perfectly immaterial to me what adjectives I deserve. The fact is, I am what I produce. I admit no other measurement. If I could paint better pictures for never having learned to read, I would gladly blot out of my life the little education

I possess. Look there," and he pointed to another lugger whose tawny sails were prettily dipping as she crossed their bows, and seemed to plunge from a mass of blue-black water, portentous as a thunder-cloud, into a stream of pale iridescent green, crested with foam — "look," — he spoke with his italicized manner, to the huge delight of the professor, who studied him with twinkling eyes as if he were a new specimen — "if I could paint that little boat as I see her with my eyes, — the motion, — the breeze in those warm sails, — the passion and gloom of that stormy violet, — the coldness of that cruel green, like a strong man with a shallow woman by his side, together yet never united —"

"Or like iron and chalk in a melting-pot," suggested the professor dryly.

"Or for simple folks, like oil and water," Douglas added. Hamor, with shining eyes and the inspired look of a young prophet, watched the swiftly passing picture, until all its tones were lost in a meaningless gray, and the two boats were already far apart.

"Well?" said the professor quizzically.

Hamor looked at him, smiled, and said nothing.

"He was about to swear that he would be willing to put a leathern girdle about his loins, live on locusts and wild honey, and stoop to any crime, — eh, Hamor?"

Hamor nodded good-humoredly.

"That is about it, Douglas," he answered carelessly. The brilliant look of interest had faded from his face.

He was sketching again, this time little Héléne, glancing very kindly at the timid child almost as pale to-day as her coiffe. Héléne gave him a faint smile. She was seven years old, a regular model, a favorite with all the artists, and earned more francs a month than her mother received in the ursine. Her round face in the small cap,

her light-blue eyes and cherub mouth, were well known to Paris dealers. The child would lift her cheek to be kissed, and smile serenely at you, with a certain conscious dignity, as of one who completely fills her niche in the world. The moment Hamor's glance, idle enough it seemed, fell upon her, she knew it and posed. She was very fond of Monsieur Hamor. What child in the village was not, indeed? He moved his head slightly to the left, and raised his chin with a significant look. The little thing promptly imitated him, and held her position tolerably well in spite of the motion of the boat. Her attitude became less rigid. The color crept to her cheeks. Little Hélène had already posed three years, and instinctively responsive to the familiar pantomime she almost forgot how the boat bobbed and how big and cold and wet the waves looked.

"You are diligent, monsieur," said the professor at Hamor's side.

"I amuse myself."

"But your fancy just now, that we might all tell our life-stories like the pilgrims in the old tales? Surely to your artist-eyes we bear them on our faces."

The painters looked at one another and laughed. "That is very flattering to our perceptive faculties," Staunton began, "but—"

"But, unfortunately, an artist, like another man, has the privilege of being a fool," Douglas added bluntly.

"I was about to say," continued Staunton, "that a man may be thankful if he has one positively good gift in his art. To read and copy a face perfectly, he would need to have all good gifts, and a divine inspiration."

"And what do you say, monsieur?" the professor asked Hamor.

Hamor's eyes were cast down. He looked extremely mild. A half-tender smile was playing about his lips. He found little Hélène charming. His *béret* had fallen off, and the sunlight made his soft dull hair fairer, while in his slight and somewhat youthful growth of beard and mustache were yellow gleams. His face looked singularly long, narrow, and delicate in contrast to Staunton's and the professor's.

"I?" he said, without glancing up. "I agree with my friend. A man who paints a perfect portrait must read the soul of his subject. Did Titian even fail to sound his man? But how many perfect portraits do we see?"

"A painter may discern a man's aspirations," murmured the Alsatian, "but the wretched limitations of life are not written on our faces. Our desires and our possibilities are always at cross-purposes. So the painter fails as our faces fail to express the truth."

"Pardon, monsieur," Staunton said, "but I believe that every face in the boat tells an unerring tale, not only to an artist's eyes, but to any thoughtful observer. We may fail to read aright. A trifle may lead us astray. But our faces never lie."

The boat was running along steadily, and the conversation had attracted the attention of the sailors and girls. Indeed the latter had been from the first quite cognizant of all that Hamor said and did. They liked him. He seemed to be kindly aware of their presence. While the professor made them ill at ease, with his mocking stare, and the three other gentlemen were as unconscious of their presence as if they were coils of rope or piles of sardine-nets.

A modest whispering, accompanied by many glances at Hamor, began among the Bretons in the bow. His face bent over his work, expressing a tender comprehen-

sion of childhood at large and of little Hélène as its nearest representative, was receiving the intent scrutiny of seven pairs of eyes. At length he became conscious of it, and looked up inquiringly.

Douglas, who sat nearest the Bretons, said quietly: "These girls imagine that they have discovered a singular resemblance."

"Between you, I am sure, and a certain eminent historical personage," added the professor in a low tone to Hamor.

"It is the same face," began Nona, timid yet eager, "that is in the great picture in the church, with the children around Him, and the little ones in His arms — and —"

Hamor flushed, rose abruptly, thrust his sketch-book into his pocket, letting the tiller swing, seized his *béret*, pulled it well down on his forehead, and turned his back to the others.

Staunton, with more cordiality than he had shown Hamor that day, said:

"We know you do not pose for it, Hamor."

"Good heavens, no! Do me that justice. Nothing annoys me more. I have heard it quite often enough."

"Monsieur Hamor!" called Meurice, "where is my man at the helm? Do you see the islands? Run her between the fort and the light. You see the Penfret phare?"

"Yes, yes, patron," answered Hamor, and jammed down the helm. The professor crossed to Staunton's side, and asked maliciously: "Where is your theory now?"

"Undisturbed," was the tranquil answer. "As I said, we are not all physiognomists."

"Monsieur Hamor has, it is evident, narrow temples, —"

Staunton was a good conventional Roman Catholic. "Pardon, monsieur," he interrupted; "but need we go into details? I admit a resemblance to a type often made use of in certain pictures. I have been frequently struck with it. But it annoys Monsieur Hamor; and as for myself —"

"Oh, by all means let us drop the subject, if you have any scruples," said the Frenchman, with a good-natured shrug. "And there lie the Lannions?"

"Mon dieu, how triste they are, the nine barren sisters!" exclaimed the Alsatian.

"Sisters? They look like a rugged vanguard of heroes meeting the first rush of an angry foe," said Hamor, with enthusiasm.

"And to me," remarked the debonair professor, "they look like nine flat and uninteresting islands, with not a solitary claim to picturesqueness, but with, I am informed, specimens of the *Labrus quadrimaculatus*, the *Chenopus pespelicani*, and even of the very rare *Balanoglossus salmoncus*."

"Rocks to the starboard, M'sieur Hamor!"

"Oui, patron," called Hamor brightly. They soon passed several smooth conical rocks, outposts of the Lannions, just raising their ugly black heads above the waves.

"Nasty things to come on unawares!" and Meurice nodded his head in repeated asseveration, scrutinizing them with much animosity. "They've punched a hole in many a good boat's ribs, and helped to fill the graveyard on the Loch."

They neared the phare on Penfret, the fort on the Cigogne, the cluster of fishermen's houses on St. Nicholas, and the rude chapel on the Loch. They saw no striking outlines, no towering cliffs, nothing to

attract the ordinary eye, — as the professor had said, nothing picturesque. The significance of the Lannions was something deeper than the picturesque contains. Barren, desolate, with long stretches of purest sand meeting long stretches of coarse grass, revealing liquid depths of gold and purple and shining green, — a royal splendor of color such as one dreams must fill a deep sea-cave with light, — the islands impressed the artists with their extraordinary remoteness from the world. The shores seemed like untrodden virgin soil. The pure, cool breath of the ocean refreshed them continually. The Lannions belonged not to the land but to the vast realm of the sea. No wonder that it jealously claimed its own! What right had man here?

The boat anchored by the Loch, but some distance out, as the tide was ebb or just turning. Over the slippery rocks covered with treacherous masses of seaweed the young men made their way.

“You see that it is monotonous,” said the professor, — “flat, dull.”

“Yes, it is monotonous,” replied Hamor absently, his face radiant, his eager eyes discovering in every transparent pool qualities of color that were a tangible joy to him.

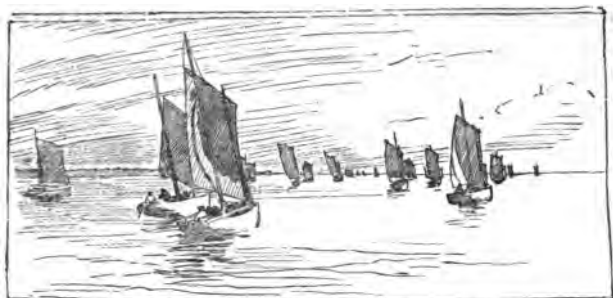
Suddenly he heard a little cry of distress. Turning, he saw that Hélène, scrambling along behind the others and making what seemed to her smallness perilous leaps, had slipped and fallen. The next moment he had run lightly back, swung the child up on his shoulder, and was carrying her securely to dry land.

Meurice from his boat saw it. “That gars has a heart,” he said. “The others were nearer.”

Having landed behind the chapel, they passed the curé’s tiny garden-plot, where a few herbs and heads of

coarse salad led a meagre and precarious existence beside a rabbit-pen well fortified by stones. Hamor, in advance with the professor, came round towards the church-porch; but before descending the bank that slightly sheltered one side of the chapel, they stopped short in considerable surprise.





CHAPTER IX.

THYMERT was standing at his chapel door, tall, erect, his dark head bare. He had raised an old rifle to his shoulder, pointing it indefinitely over the waves. A flash, a report, — he lowered his gun, and saw the strangers. With a warm smile he came quickly towards them.

“Is this a war-signal, monsieur le recteur?” Hamor said, taking the priest’s outstretched hand. “We are pilgrims, not invaders.”

“You are my welcome guests,” replied the curé, with the graciousness of a prince. “I was calling my people to mass,” he explained simply. “Our chapel has no bell.”

He looked with frank interest at each face. After a few friendly words, he said, turning abruptly :

“They do not come, I see. They are sometimes late. I must fire again.” He gravely reloaded and fired ; then stood shading his eyes with his hand, and scanning his whole realm, until he saw some boats putting off from the more distant islands.

"Ah, there they are! They'll be here soon," he said contentedly. Turning with his flashing smile to his guests: "Messieurs, you will attend mass, and then you will breakfast with me." This was an announcement of his sovereign will rather than an invitation. "You will give me that great pleasure. But pardon, you have not seen my house." Preceding them with his swinging step, he threw open a door on one side, then on the other, of the small square vestibule finished in rough boards.

"Here is my dining-room and study; this is my bedroom. Consider it all your own, gentlemen. It seems a curious place to you, no doubt, but you are welcome everywhere. It may amuse you to examine my quarters." He threw open cupboards where books, old newspapers, and bottles were heaped together in dusty confusion. He showed them the passage leading from his study to his kitchen, cosily situated left of the choir; and on the other side of the church a similar one from his bedroom to the sacristy.

Whether it was owing to Thymert's example, or to the salt smell, or to the nautical appearance of things in general, the young men felt as if they were on a ship, began to walk with ~~caution~~ as if planks were rising to meet their feet, and would have experienced little surprise had the chapel of Our Lady of the Sea set sail for Spain. Implements of various kinds, spades, ladders, oars, lay along the passages. There were also a few rude beds, and a quiet nook apart for the drowned dead to lie until they should be borne to the little churchyard.

"You see we are not so very poor at the Lannions," Thymert said, smiling always, "but that we can give a guest a night's quarters. In fact, once when we were

very full, I put a stranger in there," pointing significantly over his shoulder. "He did not sleep the worse for it, as he did not know, and" — with a shrug — "living or dead, we are but men."

"There are many drowned men washed upon the islands, I have heard," remarked Hamor.

"Mon dieu, yes," said the priest thoughtfully. "They seem to be weary of tossing about on the waves, and come pleading for burial under our Blessed Lady's protection. We had a funeral here only last week. The gentlemen would, I think, have found it a strange scene. A poor fellow was washed on the sands, here on the Loch, before my chapel door. He lay face down. The commandant of the *Merle* was here that day with some of his men. You know the commandant? He is a noble man. You should have heard the few words he spoke to his sailors. They wrapped the drowned man in the flag, and we buried him out there, and they never turned him once. They did not dare to look at his face, you understand. He was lost overboard probably from some French man-of-war passing us far out at sea. Monsieur le commandant stood before his men, and told them that sooner or later this was the end which he and they must meet; that it does not matter when the end comes, if it finds a man at his post. The sea is the sailor's grave, but the wave that sweeps over him will wash him into a safe haven. The strange sailor whom we had laid to rest was happy, wrapped in the beloved flag of France, with a last farewell from sailor lips, with sailors' prayers for his soul. Let every man do his duty, and look death boldly in the face. Then he will be worthy to be buried in the flag of his country, to be mourned by brave men; and when the sea claims him as its own, be it to-day, to-morrow, or after years, he is

ready. Courage and duty was what monsieur le commandant taught his men. It is what he always teaches them," he added warmly, "not only with words, but with his life."

"And you, monsieur le recteur, did you say nothing?" asked Staunton.

Thymert looked at him modestly. "Oh, yes! after the burial service I spoke to my Bretons, of course. I said very much the same thing as monsieur le commandant, but I cannot speak as he does. When he speaks, it stirs the blood. I have no eloquence, you know, but my men are used to me. They understand my voice. When I tell them we must all live and die like brave Bretons, they believe me."

"You appear to make a strong distinction between Frenchman and Breton, I observe," said the professor, smiling.

"Monsieur, I would fight with France against any other nation, but I would fight with Brittany against France. I love France: I am a Frenchman. But, first of all, I am a Breton," and he drew himself up with almost defiant pride and a warm flash in his eyes. "It is a pity, gentlemen," he went on after a moment, "that you did not hear the commandant. You would never be able to forget such a scene. While we stood there the wind rose, and the waves seemed to be in a great fury, as if they were determined to sweep us and the fresh grave away. Oh, yes!" — with a quiet smile, — "the sea will have us all, soon or late, as monsieur le commandant said. But the gentlemen will excuse me. I must go to the sacristy, or my people will be justified in firing the gun to call their recteur. After mass, then. Au revoir, messieurs." And away he strode down the rough passage under the eaves, bow-

ing his high head to enter the small doorway of the sacristy.

He was simple as a child, autocratic as a Cæsar. On his islands, absolute monarch, he anticipated no resistance from his guests. The five men had listened to him with deference. There was a singular fascination in his strong personality. He seemed to be larger than any one of them, although not taller than Hamor and Douglas, and less heavily built than the professor. He spoke rapidly, often abruptly, and on his face every passing emotion revealed itself fearlessly.

"I would n't go to mass for any other man on earth," said the professor, with a grimace; "but we are in the hands of our superior. Allons. Let us face the candles."

They turned and went into the little chapel, beginning to fill now with its fisher congregation, summoned across the waters by the sound of their recteur's gun. Staunton, a gentle approving smile on his face, much pleased with Thymert, and at home in any church, knelt between a withered old crone and a beggar with a wooden leg. The two philosophers, with an expression of lofty patience, leaned against the wall; while Hamor and Douglas curiously examined the rough building, its decorations of colored paper, its simpering wooden image of Our Lady of the Isles, adorned with tawdry flowers and gold and silver tinsel much tarnished by the sea-damp.

"That a strong man can pray before that ghastly figure!" thought Hamor. "I must paint him a decent picture some day," — pushing a prie-dieu towards a woman with a baby on her breast, and stooping to pick up a breviary which a lame man had dropped. Through the open door he could see a boundless expanse of ocean.

The tide had turned, and was creeping in over yellow seaweed and little pools. The mundane cut of Staunton's coat made him smile, he scarcely knew why. "Staunton's an uncommonly good fellow," he thought kindly, with some wonder watching his friend rise and kneel and cross himself in unison with the old woman on the left and the old man on the right. Meanwhile the responses were more fervent than harmonious, and it was impossible not to remark that Thymert did not intend to lose much time. Not that there was any perceptible want of dignity in his manner; but he moved about the chancel in a masterful way, somewhat as if he were treading a quarter-deck, and gave his small acolyte in rough shoes considerable trouble to keep up with him. While his voice was strong and rich, his intoning lacked the singing, legato cadence common to the conventional priest, and the chapel seemed scarcely large enough to contain his superabundant vitality.

Soon, very soon it seemed to Hamor, mass was over, and the coiffed women, the disabled sailors, many of them old men with flowing hair and crutches, streamed out of the chapel, and, chatting, walked slowly down towards their boats or loitered for a word with their recteur. Nona and Marie, with Hélène, whispered together and looked about curiously. There were many faces which the artists found interesting, — strong, weather-beaten, stern still, in spite of age, — as of men who had faced danger half a century or more. Few young men were present. It was fair weather and the boats were out.

Presently Thymert, freed from his surplice, came swinging down the chapel in the old soutane.

"I did that in twenty-three minutes!" he announced triumphantly to his amused guests, awaiting him, in the

vestibule. "And now, messieurs, we will have our breakfast. My good Brigitte has done what she could."

"Monsieur le recteur," said Hamor, "you will not scorn a couple of hampers madame at the Voyageurs packed for us? Consider," in laughing apology, "we are five hungry men, descending upon you after a sail of four hours."

Thymert, undisturbed, said with his grandest air, "Oh, thanks, we are not proud at the Lannions." Then, smiling, "I have never known madame at the Voyageurs to do anything inopportune or unacceptable. I really hope there are lobsters," he added with eagerness, "for Brigitte tells me she has none this morning."

Not one of those five men ever forgot that simple breakfast at the Lannions; where the little acolyte, divested of his robe, sprang eagerly to do their bidding, and the young priest, with his dark, eloquent face, was their host, and the old Atlantic rose while they sat and talked, until his mighty winds sounded in their ears, and the surf, breaking in strong sunlight, flung its rainbow spray against the chapel window-panes.

Thymert produced after a while a couple of venerable bottles, hoary with dust and cobwebs. "We will drink this together," he cried joyfully; "it is the gift of my good bishop. I had forgotten that I had it. But you will perceive a grand difference." He filled their glasses himself with a friendly look in the face of each guest. In his manner was the fine warmth of hospitality. He was eager, cordial, almost affectionate. The charm of his naturalness was irresistible. They all responded by giving him their best and happiest mood.

When they talked of the Lannions, of Plouvenec, of Brittany, he was well-informed and interesting. If the

conversation touched upon some topic of the world beyond, he asked the naïve questions of an intelligent child. Some one happening to wish to refer to a newspaper of the district, Thymert, unconcerned, produced the latest one he possessed, a Quimper journal six weeks old, and smiled with his guests as they saw the date.

"My friend Morot brings me newspapers sometimes, but they do not interest me much. I have work enough usually without reading. Then, often I am sailing my good boat. When I have time to read, I take my Virgil," he remarked with perfect simplicity. "Often he is my only companion except little Erec."

"And Brigitte?" suggested one of the young men, interested in this hermit life.

"She has a family on Penfret. She comes only when I have need of her; always Sundays, and now and then during the week. I call her with two gun-shots. Erec cooks for me usually: he is a famous steward. Erec," — with an indulgent smile at the sunburnt acolyte, — "tell these gentlemen what you can cook."

"Monsieur le recteur is content with his milk soup," answered the boy with timid pride, followed by a look of mortification, and the abject confession, "but I often burn the crêpes."

Thymert laughed with the others. "Never mind, Erec," he said encouragingly. "I have burned many a crêpe for the recteur of Beûzec, when he was beating Latin into my dull pate. Ah, how I suffered, and how I thank him now! I was a very good mousse. My people were all sailors. But books were my despair. Erec is a good mousse too, and much better at his books than I ever was."

"And you read your Virgil here nights alone, when the sea is high and the winds come sweeping across

half a world?" Hamor pictured the curé with an old book in his hand, his eyelids drooping and a Gerard Dow effect of flickering candle-light upon his bowed, tonsured head, dark, shaven cheek, and strong chin.

"Because my Virgil is all I know," Thymert said simply. "But I know him almost by heart. Nights, when there is a bad sea and any of my boats are out, and I am anxious about my brave fellows, I walk up and down the chapel and repeat my Virgil."

"No wonder that you need no morning newspaper from Quimper, or even the *Paris Figaro*," Staunton exclaimed heartily.

"Do you know the story of our Saint Kadoc? I presume not. Our Breton saints belong to the soil. They are a home-loving, tenacious race. They do not go out into your great world; they would feel awkward there." Thymert was smiling frankly.

"Kadoc?" Hamor reflected an instant. "Where have I heard that name recently—? Ah!" with an amused look—"I remember: Kadoc is a Plouvenec amphibious animal."

"No, no, monsieur; Kadoc was a very tender-hearted saint who loved his Virgil,—to excess, perhaps. You will see I follow an illustrious example. Shall I tell you about him? I am talking very much to-day, I fear; I am excited; I am not used to such pleasant company. I did not know that I should like so many strangers at once. Now I wish you would come often," he exclaimed with boyish eagerness. "It makes my islands more beautiful to me. It makes the heart warm."

"Ah, you love your islands well!" Staunton gave him a gentle look of comprehension.

"I love them so well that I cannot imagine myself

living elsewhere. It is a rough life, but dear to me. I know every soul through and through. I know every boat."

"A man like you ought to study," remarked the professor suavely.

"Pardon, monsieur," and Thymert flushed to his temples; "I could never be a scholar. I have no gifts. I am best suited to my islands. Only an unforeseen calamity could force me to leave them."

"But St. Kadoc," said Staunton with kindly tact, — "are we not to hear about him?"

"Ah, yes, St. Kadoc," Thymert replied cordially. "He lived upon an island off the coast of Morbihan, in the fifth century. When his friends came to breakfast I suppose he used to give them *hydromel* to drink," — smiling and filling the glasses with the bishop's wine. "He was a son of a Cambrian chief. He loved his sword, his harp, and his book. At fifteen he was already a warrior. But a disciple of St. Patrick taught him to love his harp and his book better than his sword. However, as far as I know, he never forgot the use of that. Brittany has had valiant saints. They could always fight, you know. The Saxons drove him and his friends over here to Armorica. The Saxon race, begging your pardon, gentlemen, — but the old chronicle says so, — was accursed of God and man."

"We all know it," remarked Hamor with an air of conviction. "We have always been a very bad lot. But don't look at me alone. Staunton is Saxon, too."

"Well," continued Thymert, "St. Kadoc did much good over here. He taught his people how to improve their lands, their flocks and herds; how to sing and how to fight, if fight they must; but best of all he loved peace. His island was fertile and blooming, not sterile

like my poor little Loch. One day the holy man and his friend St. Gildas were examining a bridge Kadoc had built from his island to the mainland. You know the legend of the bridge, I am sure. It is not the exclusive possession of Bretagne. It was a troublesome bridge, for whatever the good Christians accomplished by day the devil destroyed by night. It is a way the devil has. Finally, St. Kadoc made a treaty with him, promising him, if he would let the bridge stand, the first living thing that should traverse it after completion. When the day came for the consecration of the bridge, and the banners were flying and the procession chanting, there was the devil waiting in great glee to claim his own. But St. Kadoc sent a dog over as tribute, and then fell back laughing against a rock, which bears his impression to this day."

"It would seem that the devil had grown sharper since the fifth century," remarked the professor. "He is less credulous in these days."

The curé, with a good-humored smile, went on: "So St. Kadoc and St. Gildas stood on the bridge looking at the earth and sky and the sea with its islands, and talking piously of the bliss of the elect. Now Kadoc carried his Virgil under his arm. Taking the beloved book in his hand, he burst into tears. Gildas asked him why he wept, and Kadoc replied: 'I weep at the thought that this sweet singer is perhaps in torment!' 'Perhaps!' cried Gildas with great severity. Gildas was a different kind of a saint, you see," explained Thymert with a mischievous look. "He was a reformed Druid."

"Ah, yes, an iron-clad saint. We all know that kind," Hamor commented lightly.

"— 'Perhaps, indeed! There is no doubt about it whatever. He is damned for good and all,' said Gildas."

"With huge satisfaction, no doubt," remarked the professor.

"Well, yes, with considerable satisfaction, I presume," Thymert admitted, smiling, "being a converted Druid, you know. — 'Your Virgil is burning in unquenchable fires. Do you then imagine that our Lord has a special system of justice for story-tellers?' Gildas demanded sternly."

"Not a bad idea, that," and Hamor smiled approvingly, — "plenary indulgence to poets and painters."

"— Kadoc was a good fighter, but he was gentle with his friends. Making no response, he stood looking sadly at his book feeling very uncomfortable."

"It's clear enough," said Douglas, "Gildas bullied him."

"— Suddenly a gust of wind swept over the bridge and blew the book into the water."

"It is not difficult to imagine St. Gildas's tone in regard to this misfortune," the professor said dryly, "saints being apt to choose a peculiar mode of consolation when their friends are in trouble."

"Yes, he no doubt grew uncommonly self-righteous and didactic," Staunton added.

"The fact is, Kadoc ought to have taunted the old heathen with his disgraceful past," drawled Douglas, "and hit him with the skulls of his victims."

"— Gildas did avail himself of this occasion to interpret the loss of the book as a judgment of heaven against Virgil, if not to some extent against Kadoc himself," Thymert continued. "But Kadoc, in much distress, retreated to his cell, saying to himself: 'I will neither eat nor drink until I receive some sign from heaven to teach me what God does with the souls of men who sing on earth like angels in heaven.' Sighing,

he fell asleep, and through his troubled dreams he heard a far-off silver voice which murmured: 'Pray for my soul,—pray for my soul, that I may sing in heaven as I once sang on earth.'

"—The next morning a fisherman brought St. Kadoc a salmon; and when the fish was opened, there unharmed lay the Virgil which wind and sea had carried away. So the gentle saint who never condemned a soul, who never scorned a sinner, who had peace on his lips and pity in his heart, was comforted, being convinced through this sign of the blessed resurrection that the sweet singer would be finally saved, St. Gildas to the contrary notwithstanding. And from that time on, St. Kadoc remembered Virgil in his prayers."

"And what was the end of this exceptionally amiable, liberal, and enlightened man?" asked the professor.

"After he had cultivated his isle and taught his people, he returned to England, and had a parish in what you now call Northampton. One day he was celebrating mass when a troop of terrified men, women, and children rushed into the church, followed by a band of mounted Saxons. In the tumult, Kadoc continued his office with a calm voice. No one had the courage to respond. He blessed the elements. He turned towards his flock. 'Glory to God in the Highest,—' at this moment a Saxon chief urged his horse at full gallop up to the chancel and with his lance pierced Kadoc's brave heart,—'and upon earth peace, good-will to men,' he continued firmly, then fell dead before the altar. That was our Saint Kadoc," said Thymert gently. "He was right. Peace is best,—peace and good-will."

"Let us drink his health," Hamor said. "And may he have met Virgil face to face in the everlasting kingdom."

Some banter between the three painters followed, Staunton admitting that there was much of the accursed Saxon in him, Douglas claiming on account of some Welsh blood a close relationship with the ancient Bretons, Druids, saints and all, and expressing himself with much animosity towards his friend. "You know we understand the Welsh dialect," the curé said, "and the Welsh understand us."

The professor advanced various historical and philological facts of interest, and the conversation ran pleasantly on about Brittany and the Bretons, until the curé was called to the porch to see an old fisherman who needed advice. He turned on the threshold and looked back, his dark eyes brilliant and soft, his smile eloquent.

The professor, lighting a cigar, said to Staunton: "You have here much beauty and variety of landscape, but do you artists find the Breton women beautiful? Because, to my worldly eyes, they are ugly enough for the most part."

"We find beauty of color, feature, and simplicity among the very young, and the beauty of ugliness among the very old. Grace we find seldom. The girls here are very precocious physically, and age young."

"But there's a bit of leaven which leavens the whole Cornonaille lump," Hamor began with enthusiasm. "You have not seen my little Plouvenec Venus?"

"Well, no, to my knowledge I have never seen a Venus in coiffe and sabots. To speak plainly, it is not the kind of Venus that I prefer. But do you all share Monsieur Hamor's enthusiasm?" asked the professor with his amiable sceptical smile.

"I think we do, more or less," replied Staunton.

"She is certainly a lovely little thing, but unattainable as yet."

"Ah, you have not painted her?"

"Not yet, but I'm going to paint Guenn Rodellec before I'm a month older. I swear it by St. Kadoc, or rather by St. Gildas, the inflexible," Hamor declared resolutely. "I am not ungenerous," he went on, smiling. "I allow the girl time to enjoy her caprices, you understand. But I've waited about long enough."

"What is she then?"

"Oh, a wild little fisher-girl, works in the usine as they all do — bargains for sardines at night when the boats come in, hand and glove with all the sailors, holds her own with all the old fish-wives, is known for miles around Plouvenec, — runs about freely at midnight as at noon and flings a not too fine jest at everybody. A clever little head, I fancy, and an immense amount of life and fire. Her father is a drunken brute. Her other family associations I know nothing about except that she has a small hump-backed brother, who looks slyer than the deuce. But the girl has the savage grace of a wild animal, and an intense kind of beauty I have never before met with. There is something tropical about her, and infinitely fresh. I doubt if she's wholly Breton. She must be southern."

"Indeed. You surprise me."

"For my part, I think her muscular development even more astonishing than her beauty," Douglas remarked in his slow droll way. "She is so light and swift, I always stand still to see her go by, and hold my breath."

"I assure you, monsieur," said Hamor, warming with his subject, slowly sipping his wine and looking at the

professor in a convincing manner, — “that this rude little Bretonne not only has superb color, an abundance of vivacity, the richness and warmth of the south, but she is a model of pure outline. I saw her sculling a boat the other day. I watched every line and movement. The girl would be faultless in marble,” Hamor asserted solemnly and respectfully, as another man might state a religious belief.

“*Ma foi*,” said the professor blandly, holding his glass up to the light and looking at it with one half-closed twinkling eye, “here’s a chance for a speculation. If half what you say is true, she would make her fortune at the hippodrome. They would pay high for such a combination of beauty, freshness, and muscle. They don’t find it every day, you know. And then, — *après*,” he smiled and blew an airy kiss from the tips of his fingers into an indefinite future.

There was an involuntary movement at the table. Even Douglas straightened himself. The painters had been talking in the careless fashion of the atelier. Beauty and all its sacred lines, nature in her truth, belonged to them. They were by no means accustomed to drape their meaning. But here was something repulsive and foreign to their taste. After a pause, unpleasant to the whole circle, Hamor began very gravely :

“Pardon, monsieur, you misunderstand completely. The girl is rough and wild, but perfectly good. If anything that I have said has led you to think otherwise, I can only say I am sorry.”

The professor smiled amiably, raising his eyebrows. “But she is to become a model?”

“It is only fair to explain,” said Staunton, “that the girls whom we employ here as models are a very

honest set. They are hard-working and coarse. They sometimes discuss matters in our presence that are, I must say, as a rule, ignored in drawing-rooms. They use expressions that are vulgar, often profane. They know no better. But they would resent a liberty with quite as much indignation as other girls, no better perhaps, but whom circumstances have educated to be less free of speech."

"It is a very different kind of work you see, down here in the country," began Douglas, "from our work in Paris. You are thinking, no doubt, of the regular Paris models."

"You painters are, nevertheless, dangerous young men," laughed the professor.

"I have never heard of but one girl down here who has had any trouble on account of us painters," replied Hamor hotly. "There was an Yvonne who drowned herself. I am not prepared now to discuss the question whether it was or was not a nobler fate to catch a dim glimpse of a higher world, to be useful in a great art-motive, to suffer and die of grief and desperation when her fine lover left her, than if she had never seen and known him, and had simply married a man of her kind and become a household drudge, to be sworn at and beaten, to grow old and stolid and ugly before her time."

"Ah, Hamor," protested Staunton, frowning slightly, "don't air that abominable sophistry just now —"

"I say that I don't propose to discuss the question, whatever my private opinion may be," continued Hamor in the same tone. "Still, when I see girls posing as innocently as if they were playing dolls, when they climb fences and ladders like boys, and run about my atelier like so many kittens, I feel inclined to present the case to you as it actually is."

The professor shrugged his shoulders, smiling with polite incredulity.

“Your statements, messieurs, do honor to your amiable sentiments, as well as to your faith in human nature, but are, I fear, incorrect. The statistics show that the morality of the fishing population of Brittany — at best a half-civilized, lamentably ignorant, and brutal class — is —”

He stopped short. The imperious gesture of Thymert's uplifted arm arrested his fluent discourse. Pale with the wrath of a strong man, lofty as a rebuking angel, the priest stood motionless on the threshold, then with one stride came forward. The young men instinctively rose. No one spoke. Thymert was struggling to control himself. At length he began, his deep voice vibrating with passion :

“Pray do not continue, monsieur, or you will force me to be guilty of a rudeness under my own roof, — it may be of a sin almost within the walls of the chapel. I should be sorry to tell you that your statistics — *lie!* There, I have said it! Who makes your statistics? Is it one of us? Is it a Breton? Do they who know their land slander the peasants? They honor them. They revere the traditions, the ancient songs and legends of a noble race. Read our brave history. What land has produced heroes that fought more valiantly, died more nobly, than our Breton seigneurs, or a folk more faithful to its lords?”

“Permit me, monsieur le curé, or” — correcting himself with careful politeness — “monsieur le recteur, as I observe you say in Bretagne,” interposed the professor, “I was not alluding to your history, to your past, of which every Frenchman must be proud. I was merely mentioning a deplorable fact in regard to the coast population —”

Thymert interrupted him impetuously: "Yes, you were talking of statistics, and I tell you we are a people apart. Strangers do not know us; strangers cannot reach us: we are defiant; we are reserved; we are stubborn; we are Bretons, and all is said. Does your man who prepares the statistics bear our hardships, brave our perils, wrestle with the land for its fruits, defy the sea and its storms, suffer our poverty, live and die with us?"

No one spoke. The priest resumed solemnly: "As for our young girls," — he paused, — "the dear Christ bless them," he said simply, his arms outstretched in infinite benediction. "As for the young girl who has been your chief theme," — his voice grew tender, his face full of a great pity, — "gentlemen, my guests, she is a motherless child; she is of my own blood."

He bowed his head, breathing deeply.

Hamor's face expressed unfeigned solicitude. "Can you forgive me?" he began very rapidly; "I alone am to blame. I introduced this unfortunate topic. My careless tongue continued it when the others had finished. I meant no harm, to you, to her, to anybody. I never listen to my own words; I do not know half the time what I say; I talk to talk; I had no idea that she was anything to you. I simply cannot express my regret for my awkwardness."

Thymert raised his dark, fervent eyes and looked earnestly at the painter.

"Monsieur," he said slowly, "she is much to me; she is my niece —"

"Your niece?"

"My niece *à la mode de Bretagne*. Elsewhere we are cousins. In Brittany one respects one's family. Monsieur, how should you feel, what should you do, if I

should come to your land, into your home, and speak of your sister as you have spoken of mine? For she is as dear as a sister to me."

His face darkened with the remembrance of certain expressions he had heard.

"You would say, would you not, that I was a half-civilized, ignorant Breton? You would knock me down — shoot me? Tell me, monsieur, what do the men of your country do when men insult their sisters?"

Hamor stood speechless before him. What was there to say here?

"I heard your offence," the priest said with bitterness; then, with a supreme effort, "I also heard your defence. For that I thank you. I believe you, monsieur, when you tell me that you profoundly regret your own words." He slowly took Hamor's proffered hand.

"We all do," Staunton interposed gently; "we could not, of course, know that the topic would be so fatally personal, but it was in very bad taste, at best. I wish you would believe how sorry we are."

Thymert looked at him. "You are kind," he said. He liked the deference of Staunton's manner, and the steady glance of his eyes. "I thank you. — Let it pass, messieurs," — as the others would have spoken, — "I am sure you will have no desire to make any farther allusion to a young girl who in her innocent life has done nothing which merits the attention she has received to-day from six men. It is enough, gentlemen, let it pass. It may be we have all something to pardon. I, too, was hasty. I am not used to the world. I have hot blood. Pray forget it. Excuse me, I will return directly," and he walked rapidly across the corridor and closed the door of his sleeping-room.

"Is that door shut?" said the irrepressible professor

with a twinkle in his merry eyes. "Then let me say that this is all very fine, admirable, — but it doesn't hold water. It is the most superb incoherence I ever heard. He reasons like a woman. Can a man refute a statement he has not had the patience to hear? As for the statistics, they are most ably prepared. I have only to refer you to —"

Staunton frowned, and Hamor interrupted impatiently:

"Surely we have done enough harm without continuing this subject. We have succeeded in insulting a man in his own house, and a man whose robe does not permit him to demand satisfaction."

"Very good," replied the professor amicably, "I merely wished to mention that the statistics —"

"Drown the statistics!" Douglas exclaimed bluntly.

"Willingly," returned the Frenchman, laughing; "but I presume I may be permitted to remark that your Hero of Nine Isles is a great child."

"I have never seen a man whom I admire so much," Staunton said softly.

"What a pose! Great heavens, what a pose!" exclaimed Hamor, his head thrown back, his eyes half closed, still seeing the priest in the doorway. "There is something of the Othello in him. If I could see him roused to his highest pitch of passionate fury!" He took out his sketch-book, and made a few nervous strokes representing a pair of powerful shoulders, head thrown haughtily back, and an uplifted, warning arm.

Thymert now returned and made evident efforts to restore the friendly tone which was lost. But his manner was abrupt and absent. It reminded Hamor of their first interview. "We have sorely wounded this gentle savage," he reflected, "how shall I ever regain

his confidence?" No one seemed able to throw off the constraint which oppressed him.

After a somewhat prolonged pause the professor suddenly remarked, smiling amiably at them all: "You would be surprised to know what happened to me this morning. Fancy it. I looked in at the vivier on my way to the quay, and I found that our stupid lout of a servant had burned my manuscript upon which I've been working steadily three months. I have no notes. Everything was worked out mathematically, step by step. It is a total loss, and I must leave Plouvenec in two days."

"What did you do to him?" asked Douglas.

The professor shrugged his shoulders. "I would have vivisectioned him, if it would have restored my manuscript, monsieur."

The silent Alsatian spoke: "He smiled as he is smiling now—and told the boy to close the vivier for the day, and if he valued his life always to remain in the service of a philosopher."

"And you have been so light-hearted all day, monsieur," Staunton said kindly. "You have great patience."

"Que voulez-vous?" returned the Frenchman with his mocking little stare. "One must have one virtue."

Thymert looked up strangely: "I thank you, monsieur, that you have told me that. I am sorry for your great loss. But I shall be glad to remember it."

"*Tiens!*" said the professor, smiling.

Again the conversation languished. At the pleasant table, instead of gentle St. Kadoc who with his Virgil under his arm seemed to have glided in and taken his place among them, bringing peace and good-will, there was now a little unwelcome angry figure that their idle

words had conjured up, and that nothing could appease. A frowning beautiful face, in a white coiffe—the bold pure eyes of a young girl, looking resentment at them for daring to bring her there among their men's talk, their cigars and their wine. Scorn and impatience on the young mouth—defiance and suspicion in every glance. So she stood before them and would not go.

Thymert saw her and his heart was sore. To him she raised the lovely eyes he had seen in her innocent face ever since she was born, but in their blue depths he missed the great friendliness, the sweet merriment, the carelessness he knew. They followed him with grave inquiry: "Why do you let strange men tear me asunder? Is not my body my own?"

"This is what they call art," he thought with a shudder, replying mechanically to his guests. He was glad, and they were not sorry, when he could rise and say that he must call his people to vespers. Again he fired his gun; again the little boats came slowly over from the other islands, bringing the maimed, the halt, and the blind.

The strangers stood again in the rough chapel, through which cold sea winds blew freely. Staunton found a pathos there, which he had failed to feel in the morning, and Thymert had the eyes of a hunted animal.

As they were sailing back to Plouvenec, the sailors and the girls sang light songs, Hamor at the helm often sang with them, smiling, sympathetic, and kind.

Meurice let the sardine-nets trail after the boat. The fish, like a rainbow-colored cloud, swept into them. "It is nothing," said the patron, throwing some rogue with an indifferent air,—"a hundred or so. It is the middle of October. In a couple of days they will all be gone. Some years they are gone before this."

He drew up the net and shook it. The brilliant purple and silver and blue and rosy shining things fell into the bottom of the boat, where a sailor adroitly counted them, marking the tally and handling them lightly.

"Strange that they appear so suddenly on these coasts in spring, and vanish as suddenly in the fall. Why do they come?" said Hamor as he watched this.

"To be caught in our nets and packed in our usines, to be sure," answered Meurice, laughing. "We should think it stranger still, if they did n't come."

"Sélina, Sélina, c'est comme ça que je t'aime,"

sang the girls and the sailors in high spirits, with no embarrassment at the realism of certain parts of the text, looking about and smiling frankly. "Sélina, Sélina," sang sailors on other boats, catching up the refrain.

"This has been a memorable day," said Hamor thoughtfully as they approached the Plouvenec shore, and sky and waves were tinged with the stormy orange sunset.

"In many ways," was Staunton's quiet answer.

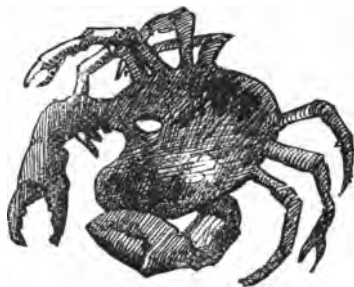
"Did you hear what Thymert said to me in the chapel just before we left?"

"No."

"I told him I wanted to paint him a picture. He looked at me very strangely and was silent. I thought I understood, and I hastened to tell him that the wish had occurred to me during mass this morning. When he found that I was not offering it in reparation or atonement for my misdeeds, he assented. 'What would you like?' I asked. 'A Christ for my people,' he replied. 'I have always wanted it.' — 'And how?

Blessing the children? Walking on the sea?' — 'No' — he said with the same strange look in his eyes. 'It is easy for us Bretons to bless children, and,' — with a kind of grim humor — 'we can almost walk upon the sea. But suffering is never easy. It is good for us to realize that He suffered. I want a Crucifixion. And make the agony as terrible as you can,' he said fiercely. 'Yes, it is a Crucifixion that we want at the Lannions.' I fear I shall have to go to Antwerp, if I hope to make it terrible enough for him," Hamor concluded with a smile.

Staunton shook his head thoughtfully, and looked far across the yellow bay towards the Nine Islands. The Penfret light was faintly visible.



CHAPTER X.



HE curé of the Lannions felt restless on his isles. He sat in his study, and began a letter to his very reverend bishop. Letter-writing, under the best auspices, was not one of Thymert's joys. He knotted his forehead like a schoolboy, and leaned over the paper. Through the window he could see the little

waves dancing in the sunlight, and the amber gleams of the seaweed in transparent depths. Throwing up his hand to shade his eyes, with his habitual movement, he looked across the bay towards the mainland, — a long, troubled look; then moved his chair abruptly, and turned his back upon the invitation of the dancing waves.

“Monseigneur,” he began. The letter had been long delayed. He had much to say to the bishop, — instruction and advice to ask, thanks to express. Yet the one distinctly defined thought in the curé's mind was the desire to go over to Plouvenec. Moreover, he did not wish to wait. He wished to go then.

MONSEIGNEUR, — With sentiments of profound reverence permit the most devoted of your servants to inform you that —

MONSEIGNEUR, — Deign to accept the expression of my most grateful thanks for your gracious permission that —

Thymert passed his hand through his long black hair, flinging it back from his troubled face. It was here at this table that they sat. Only yesterday, and it seemed already long ago. Here was Monsieur Hamor with his head thrown back, his eyes half closed, smiling and making smoke-rings. Here was the professor opposite, saying with his bland voice what ought to be choked in his throat. And the others had sat here and here and here, — the young man with the steady eyes and the kind voice, the one with the great brown beard, the pale one with spectacles. Monsieur Hamor's eyes were not steady, — no; but he was amiable. He was sorry for what had happened. He wished to paint a picture for the chapel. The curé pushed back the table violently, — the table where they had all sat, — and left the room where the words had been uttered which were ringing still in his pained ears. He stood in his porch. A strong wind was blowing landwards, and the poor grass on the graves of the drowned sailors was fluttering with a message from the ocean. A cross was down. Thymert went out and made it fast.

“Brigitte!” he called, standing bareheaded in the graveyard.

“Monsieur le recteur,” answered the old woman, appearing at the kitchen-door.

“Do we want anything from Plouvenec?”

“But no, monsieur le recteur knows well that Monsieur Louis has brought stores enough to last a week, even after the five gentlemen's breakfast, which, as they were pretty young gentlemen with such appetites, it was a pity I was taken by surprise, and had no time to prepare some of my —”

He interrupted her garrulous regrets with a wave of his hand.

"You are sure that we need nothing?"

"There is buckwheat; there is mustard; there is oil; there is meat; there is wine, sugar, butter," — counting upon her fingers.

He stooped to straighten a cross; then with a stone pounded it down deeper. "I must put up a cross for that last poor fellow. The commandant said he would give him a stone one; but the others might not like that, when they have only wood." He gave a little smile of protection to the sad little row.

"Tapers?" he asked abruptly.

"Enough for the *fête* of Our Lady herself. Ah, yes; everything is in abundance, and monsieur le recteur may rest tranquil, thanks to Monsieur Louis, and may all saints bless him here and hereafter."

"Amen," said Thymert absently. "Is there brandy? We shall have a storm to-night or to-morrow."

"Enough for three shipwrecks," returned the old woman cheerfully, "which Our Lady forbid; but which, if she does not, heaven rest their souls."

"Amen," said Thymert mechanically, striding towards the porch. "The letter must wait," he thought. "I cannot to-day sit in that room, at that table, and write. The bishop himself would be indulgent if he knew."

The curé made the tour of his parish. His swift boat ran over to Penfret. There was nothing wanted at the light-house. He appeared at the little fort on Cigogne. Cigogne seemed as full of content as Penfret. He heard only thanks and blessings. The able-bodied men were out. The aged and infirm had no complaints. The women smiled at him as they sat in the doorways mending nets.

"Has the millennium descended upon my poor isles?" he asked himself as he put back to the Loch. "But God be thanked for the mild weather and the good fishing. And do I seek a paltry excuse? Shall I go over to Plouvenec only because old Jacques wants some snuff or his wife some yarn? Why do I hesitate?" He flushed all over his dark young face. "I will go because I wish to go,"—he threw back his head,—"because Barba bade me take care of her children. It is little Guenn who needs me? Why can I not work? Why can I not write? Why is my head a whirlpool? Something is stirring in the air, in the breeze, in the sea, in my heart, that bids me go. Is it not a warning? And from whom come such warnings if not from heaven? I will go to Guenn. Guenn needs me."

He called little Erec and set sail for Plouvenec.

Some hours later when he arrived at the village,—he met sailors on the digue and along the quay,—old acquaintances at every turn, fine fellows too, from whom he gladly received a word of welcome, with whom he would have laughed and chatted a whole free hour, had he not been called elsewhere. They were rough and brown, the sailors. They drank too much and swore and quarrelled. But never had he heard from them in their most violent moments an evil word about an innocent girl. No,—only the smooth-spoken strangers were capable of that infamy. His manner grew more cordial still. The old soutane went swinging along the road, like a triumphal procession.

Thymert's brown face, warm smile and dark affectionate eyes looked out from beneath his broad hat, and won souls. Had the magnetism of his presence been less potent, the facts of his life would still have spoken eloquently to the hearts of that rugged sailor-folk.

Personal valor, self-sacrifice, cheerful endurance and unflinching kindness are qualities the rudest of them could appreciate. In Plouvenec courage alone covered a multitude of sins. The sailors, for the most part, had the courage and the sins.

Thymert was a born leader. Had he lived a thousand years before, his fiery imagination, his love of the sea, his daring, would have sent him off at the head of his flock on voyages in search of fabulous happy isles, and his deeds would have been sung by bards, and sounded in Celtic cloisters for centuries. Or he might have been an old Armorican saint with a stalwart arm and a pious soul — fighting with a good will when heaven ordained, against a heathen king — after the battle resuming with ease his holy meditations.

Where the solemn menhir towers above lonely country ways, and long-haired peasants pass under gray skies, and the vague impressions of a remote age float like phantoms in the silent air, one could behold through the long vista of two thousand years this man's strong presence leading white-robed Druid brethren under mighty oaks, offering human sacrifice by the grave of a Celtic chieftain, lifting a stern impassioned face towards the sun-god, or fighting against the Legions and pushed back step by step towards the sea.

It would be easy, indeed, to imagine Thymert in any dominant position throughout the whole rich history of Bretagne, but one could not transplant him. In Brittany, whether his cause were just or unjust, he would have been sure of a following and of loyalty to the death. A leader, a lover, a hater, a fighter, all unknown to the brave priest, looked out of his flashing eyes, gave weight and influence to his simplest greeting. When the Plouvenec people met him coming along the lanes, his open

breviary in his hand, they did not forget it as when the maire or the judge of the peace went by, but spoke of it afterwards at home with a warm feeling about the heart. "I saw monsieur the recteur of the Lannions to-day," they would say, — the brightness of his presence reflecting a long afterglow. Plouvenec was unconsciously grateful when Thymert walked its streets. His little world was better and happier that he lived in it, and if the most of them had been called upon to describe an angel of mercy, they would have pictured no white-robed winged being, but only a sunbrowned priest in an old soutane.

To-day, for the first time in his life, he found himself studying the well-known people he met. He looked closely, questioningly, into their eyes, instead of accepting Alain and Meurice, as such, without special scrutiny. Then with an expression of relief, a beautiful smile, a clasp of the hand, he would go on. Thank God, these were his Bretons. Yet he asked none of them where Guenn Rodellec was, as he would have done only yesterday, — yes, yesterday, before the strangers came. To-day, it seemed to him that he must ask a woman — and what woman was so quiet and so wise as madame at the Voyageurs? Guenn's name had been bandied about among too many men. Not even to his frank sailors, who would risk their lives for her, would he speak of the little girl to-day.

He found madame in a small store-room, wiping winter-pears, and rolling them one by one in tissue-paper. He begged her to go on, and would not take the proffered chair, but stood by the table watching the movements of her large, firm hands. Over her work she now and then raised her calm eyes to look at him. He began to walk slowly up and down the little room.

"It is quiet here, madame," he said with a sigh. "Quiet, here at the Voyageurs?" she thought, "and the people coming in and out, — and the noisy common and the arrivals."

"It is because one does not hear the sea, monsieur le recteur," she answered tranquilly.

"That may be," he said briefly.

She followed him with slow, wise eyes.

"The house is full and prosperous, madame?"

"Yes, — the summer guests are mostly gone, it is true, — but there are the artists for the winter, and the business travellers. I am content with the season."

"The artists for the winter?" he repeated.

"Some of them."

"The ones who were at the Lannions yesterday?"

"Yes, monsieur le recteur."

He stood by the table and watched her tranquil, clever hands.

"It is quiet here," the young man said again.

She only smiled.

"You find them gentils, those artists?" he asked with a certain irritation in his deep voice.

"Ah, yes, monsieur le recteur. At the Grand, to be sure, there is another kind. But our artists are all gentils, diligent, amiable."

"Yes, they are amiable, — but they are strangers," with a frown.

"Now it is coming," thought madame, smoothing the paper with her soft palms.

"Do you know where Hervé Rodellec is to-day?"

Madame pointed with her thumb towards the quay. The drink-shop with the little glass-door, through which the orange light shone evenings, was vivid in his memory; and the night of the great catch, the crowd, the

noise, — Rodellec and Hamor and the little figure pushing past the men. What was it the strangers had said? “Down among the sailors nights?”

“One cannot do much with him,” said madame softly.

“No.”

“But Guenn is a good child.” He said nothing.

She folded and tore her tissue-paper into squares. After a pause, “Do you know where I could find Guenn?” he asked abruptly.

Madame was careful to turn her large eyes absently away from him as she reflected: “Voyons. It is Monday; there is no work in the usine; she went by with Jeanne and Nannic; she may be on the shore; she likes the third beach. I think I would go down to the third beach, monsieur le recteur.”

“Thanks,” said Thymert simply.

He was not nervous now. He was glad that he had come in to talk with this woman; there was something safe and tranquil in her ways.

“You see Guenn every day, madame?”

“Almost every day.”

“You know pretty well where she is and what she does?”

“I know where everybody is and what everybody does,—” without a smile. “It is not difficult at the Voyageurs; it is easiest of all to know about Guenn.”

“Why?”

“Because the child is so pretty; because one does not forget her; because she cannot help being heard and seen; because she is cleverest at her work, and merriest at her play, and sings the sweetest; because she is more alive than the other girls, monsieur le recteur, and worth a score of them.”

In Thymert's eyes sprang a glad and grateful look. At length he said tentatively, "It must be lonely for her at home."

Madame smiled. "She is rarely at home, monsieur le recteur."

After a moment, he began awkwardly: "Could you, madame, if she runs about too much — would you — perhaps have no place near you — it is so quiet here."

"The Voyageurs is not a good place for girls," she answered gently: "it is less quiet than you think. The strangers spoil girls here. Who is so bold and vain and empty-headed as Marguerite? Two years ago she was gentille. I keep her for the café; she is a good waitress, but she has no heart and no head. She will come to no greater harm. I am here. I must have waitresses, monsieur le recteur, it is evident. But I will not let my niece come here, or Guenn Rodellec. Did you imagine they could stand with me and put away fruit all the time?" This was as much of a joke as Madame ever permitted herself. "They would be near me, as you say, but near the strangers too. The strangers are amiable, but our girls are safest with our people."

Thymert started and frowned. She watched him gently, then went on, — smiling now as a matron may well smile upon an inexperienced boy, with amiable patronage and imperceptible irony, — for an instant ignoring the priest, and recognizing only the young man: "Believe me, monsieur le recteur, a rough night on the bay would be quieter for our girls than a dinner at the Voyageurs, where the strangers smile in taking their soup, and ask for wine with a low word over their shoulders, and inquire about our different coiffes and costumes at their coffee. They have soft voices, the

strange young gentlemen. They do no harm according to their ideas. But often I ask myself, Why do they not let our girls alone? Girls are foolish things. They do not know that such looks and such tones are not for them. They drink in all they can, and the young gentlemen, *ma foi*, they give all they can of their precious, much-used coin, and if they barely escape being what they call villains, they go away without a regret. They do harm. They should leave simple girls in their simple ways. But"—with a slow upheaving of her massive shoulders, which only frivolity could call a shrug—"it is life, *monsieur le recteur*, it is life."

Thymert stood thoughtful, silent, anxious, undecided, —listening always with a sadly perplexed look on his face.

"Poor young *curé*," thought madame, "we do not see our way clear, and we have too big a heart."

"Voyons," she began, —looking at him with the full power of her imperturbable gaze,—"our Plouvenec girls are good girls, and safest with our people. I will not let my niece or Guenn or Jeanne live at the Voyageurs and lose their heads. But I see everything; I know what goes on. The strangers will go away, sooner or later. Meanwhile, I am here," concluded madame right royally.

Thymert felt instinctive confidence in this tower of strength. Still madame had not heard the five men talking together at the Lannions.

"Good-day, madame," he said in his abrupt way,—"I thank you. It is well that I have spoken with you."

"Good-day, *monsieur le recteur*," she politely responded, "it is always an honor for the Voyageurs when you come."

He went straight to the third beach. Guenn, Jeanne, and Nannic were perched upon the rocks half-way up the cliff. The tide was ebb; the air was soft, with no chill in it. October brought golden days — for painter, poet, and fisher-folk — to those charming coasts.

A couple of Englishmen, eager for a plunge and undaunted by the stretch of sand which lay between them and the far-off shining water, were striding manfully towards their goal. A hero in striped bathing-trousers looks more humorous than a clown. Jeanne, Guenn, and Nannic, stretched at ease on the rocks, watched the long white legs march over the sands past black reef and eel-grass, and made unflattering comparisons with compasses, devil's darning-needles, windmills, and every object which their mischievous imagination could suggest.

Guenn, with a vivid cherry-color in her cheeks and a happy light in her eyes, threw herself about in the most nonchalant attitudes, now with one foot under her, now half reclining, suddenly standing erect and on the alert; but always, through every free movement, the click of the knitting-needles went steadily on, and the swift little hands worked as unconsciously as the breath of her lungs and the blood in her veins. If Breton children are not born knitting, at least their perfect comprehension of every intricate double-stitch is congenital.

So Guenn knitted, and laughed her careless laugh; while under her meek coiffe an insolence of health, mockery, and daring greeted the world at large. But not Thymert of the Lannions. As he approached, she rose quickly, smiling with pleasure, smiling modestly, as befits a young girl who meets a priest.

"She won't — she will!" cried Nannic shrilly, pull-

ing Jeanne down towards the beach. Guenn looked after the deformed child with infinite indulgence.

"Who won't?" asked Thymert.

"She — Guenn."

"Why, Nannic, a fish-hawk can talk more plainly than you. — Won't what?"

But Nannic, like the oracles of old, never committed himself.

"Guenn will — Guenn won't — Guenn will!" he repeated in a high, chanting voice, his pale face gleaming with malice.

"Is he always so wise?" asked Thymert, laughing a little.

"About me, yes," Guenn answered with conviction.

After a brief pause, "I am glad to find you," the young curé said, hesitating; "I came over expressly to talk with you."

"Now that is kind, monsieur le recteur," returned Guenn, delighted, looking at him frankly and smiling.

Thymert's isolated and austere life presented few opportunities of talking familiarly with women. Brigitte and the brown old crones on the islands he saw often, but, except for the dress and the coiffes, they did not seem unlike the wiry, gaunt fishermen.

To-day he came from the strong and calm presence of madame at the Voyageurs, from her soft hands moving with gentle regularity, her velvety eyes that turned their slow gaze upon a man and stilled his restlessness like profound sleep after fatigue. And here was this young girl raising her blue eyes sweetly to his, all her pretty ways unconsciously appealing to him for the protection he was unselfishly longing to provide for her, a little thing he had carried in his arms before she

could walk, — his dead cousin's girl. And they dared in their smooth coarseness call her bold and wild and rough; they even dared, in their veneered brutality of word and thought, to pull away the garments from her tender form and leave her exposed to their curious gaze. His heart beat fast; his face flushed; he was moved to his depths by anger and pity. He passed his hand nervously through his long hair and turned his eyes away from the little hands diligently knitting, the honest face smiling in his.

Wild? Yes, as a little bird is wild, or a fawn. But who was so bright and brave as Guenn? What girl answered him so intelligently, so modestly? Not even the maire's daughter, who had been to school in Quimper. With a new thought he suddenly looked again at the girl. Quimper? How would that do? Why not?

"She won't!" shrieked Nannic from a rock below them.

Guenn laughed. She had waited respectfully for monsieur le recteur to speak again; but monsieur le recteur seemed to have nothing to say after all. Now she began frankly, with a little explanatory nod, "It's one of Nannic's days."

"Ah?"

"Yes; sometimes I think his soul flies on before him to spy out what is coming. Do souls have wings, monsieur le recteur? Now there are revenants; everybody has seen revenants. What I want to know is, can souls go on before with a great leap. I should think so, since they can come back after death."

Thymert knew that his own soul was unquiet enough in these days; that it had been, indeed, since that night on the quay, he now realized.

Why, he knew not; but what Guenn said might be

true. Had his soul not come before him to the village to-day and drawn him after?

"But these are mysteries," he said gravely.

"And is it a sin to think about mysteries?" Guenn asked brightly. "Nannic is a mystery. If you have a mystery for a brother, you have to think of it, don't you?"

"We may consider a mystery reverently for our edification," he replied in a mechanical, priestly tone, "but we must not be too bold and sure. The holy fathers in their cells have not penetrated such spiritual secrets."

"Ma foi," said Guenn meditatively, like most of her race a compound of abject superstition and marked irreverence, "it is a pity, then, that the monks didn't have my Nannic to study in their cells. He would have puzzled them more than their big books." Then, with still more audacity: "There was a bad monk once."

Thymert smiled. "Was there never but one?"

"Well, he is the only bad one that ever was in Bretagne," she asserted confidently. "In other countries, no doubt. In Italy, where the girls are black, and wear bracelets on their ankles, and no sabots, and travel about with hand-organs, — in such heathen places, who knows what happens!" with a condescending shrug.

"But this bad Breton monk, — what do you know of him?"

"Oh, he was wild and wicked," said Guenn, with evident enjoyment of her tale. "He led many into temptation. And for his sins he was changed to stone. Alain has seen him near Brest, and Meurice too, and many more. There he stands, with a pointed nose and a pointed beard and a cowl, looking over the water. And there he stands till the Judgment Day."

"And there he stands till the Judgment Day," echoed Nannic from below.

"I saw him once, the stone monk," said the curé.

"There, I knew it was true!" exclaimed Guenn triumphantly. "Of course Alain would n't lie to me. They say he loved a fisher-girl; and that was an awful sin, was n't it, monsieur le recteur?" with enjoyable horror.

"That was a sin, indeed, Guenn."

"And will he burn and burn in hell?" she inquired with satisfaction.

"Who knows?" said Thymert wearily. "Perhaps being changed to stone was punishment enough."

Guenn settled herself still more comfortably, and looked at the curé without curiosity or shyness. She crossed her feet, knitted fast, and with quick movements of her pretty head cast now a keen glance over the whole broad bay, now an affectionate smile at Nannic.

"It looks like a storm," she said wisely, pointing with a knitting-needle to the southwest.

"Yes," Thymert replied absently, without looking. He was sitting near her, leaning his elbow on a projecting rock.

"Guenn," he began stiffly, at a loss for words, "it is hard to realize that you are nearly seventeen."

"I know," she said quite gently, looking down upon her small person, and stroking herself with some commiseration; "it is because I am so little." She felt no impulse to tell him she preferred to be small. Thymert never roused her antagonism. "But I am strong," she added eagerly; "Monsieur Morot will tell you so; and at the Beûsec Pardon I raised the weights nearly as high as Alain. No girl was ever so strong as I."

He leaned his head on his hand, and did not lift his eyes. With abrupt awkwardness he said :

"How would you like to go to school at Quimper?"

Guenn's little brown hands lay still in her lap. Her eyes grew large with surprise.

"Me? At school like the demoiselles? But no, monsieur le recteur! I should not like that at all," she exclaimed with decision.

"It is a very good place for girls," said the young man impressively. "They learn how to walk and sit, — how to embroider. They pace up and down the sunny quadrangle. They play duets on the piano. Then there are the sisters."

Guenn's cheeks grew crimson. The wind was blowing the little rings of chestnut hair back against her coiffe. There was something supernaturally rapid in the click of her needles.

"Monsieur le recteur," she said, raising her long lashes and sitting very erect, "perhaps you do not remember that I left school at twelve. Can I not walk and sit without going to Quimper?"

At the moment one knee was flung over the other in an independent, if not a revolutionary, manner, and one sabot was swinging excitedly. "Surely a great girl does not learn to walk like a baby!" she exclaimed hotly. "I can not only walk, — I can run; I can run as fast as Alain. As to embroidery, we can embroider at Plouvenec," she added loyally. "If I do not learn, it is because I am too busy for such a bagatelle."

Her manner was as lofty as if she had said her devotion to philology excluded any attention to waltzing or lawn tennis.

Thymert was an ardent young Breton, and this was a child he used to carry in his arms. Beneath his priestly

robe his heart was full of warmth and pity. He was surprised that he had hurt her. "My poor little Guenn!" he exclaimed with tender indulgence.

"All right," said Guenn, tossing her head nonchalantly, implying by this seemingly irrelevant remark her willingness to forgive and forget.

"It was only I thought you might like to be with other girls, other women," he went on cautiously. "You are always down among the men, or the women who are more — careless than the men." What was it the stranger had said — "hand and glove with the sailors, holds her own with the fish-wives?" Well, what harm was there in that? None, indeed, if Guenn were not beautiful, and the strangers had not greedy eyes. "If you had only liked the idea," he said with timid regret, "I would have managed it in some way. I don't exactly know how. It is dear, what they ask for the demoiselles. But if you would have liked it, Guenn," — he looked wistfully at her.

"Monsieur le recteur," smiling saucily in his face, "why should I try to be a demoiselle, and pace up and down in a quadrangle? Would you like it yourself? Would you like to learn to walk like a great baby? Bah! neither would I. And Nannic; what would Nannic do among the demoiselles? Just answer me that!"

"I could take care of Nannic."

"He could take care of Nannic; ah, ah!" cried Nannic himself from above.

Thymert started with some impatience.

"Don't mind; it's only Nannic," pleaded Guenn's eyes.

"And what would they do without me here?" she began eagerly. "Who would run so quickly at a word from Monsieur Morot? Who would buy his sardines

as well as me, and make as good bargains for him from the end of the digue, when the last boats come stealing in, and the air is all black and soft? Who would work the fastest for him all night long after a great catch? Who would tell such jokes that nobody could be sleepy? Who would make it lively on the common, and sing the loudest on the wall with the women waiting for the boats? Who would be everywhere all through the village, to do the odd jobs so fast, so well known as me? Who?" she cried triumphantly.

At this moment she strongly resembled her father, but in her innocent boastfulness the curé found nothing repulsive. "Life and fire," the stranger had said; was this what was meant? Could he never forget those words? Must he always now, in pain and confusion of spirit, be applying to her another man's measurement?

"My poor little Guenn!" said the curé. He wished he were an old graybeard. He wished he were an aged saint who could extend benign protection towards this hot-hearted child, and teach her to be calm and wise as she was lovely and good. He almost wished he were a woman. "My poor little Guenn," he repeated.

She looked at him wonderingly.

"And if you should die to-morrow? And do you not know they can always fill our place, — yours and mine, child; mine and yours. If places could not be filled, the world could not go on. The world fills every place, — the dearest, the best, the most precious, — just as the tide creeps up and covers the little holes Jeanne and Nannic are digging in the sand down there."

"But that is cruel," she said slowly.

"It is another mystery," replied the priest.

Her eyelids drooped in sorrowful surprise. "And

nobody would care if I should go away — if I should die?"

"I did not say that, Guenn."

"Monsieur le recteur, don't make me go to Quimper," cried the honest young voice; "don't make me go away; for, if they do not care for me, I care for them; if they would not miss me, I should miss them. Ah, I should miss my Plouvenec! I should miss the red sails on the bay, and the hoarse voices on the wind at night, and the boats coming in, and the lights along the digue, and my brave sailor-boys, — they are so good to me, all of them! — and I should miss going to the river, and all the women, Mother Quaper, and Jeanne — good little Jeanne! — and Monsieur Morot with his voice in his beard, and the lanes between the fossés and the meadows, and the sunshine on the great white fields of buckwheat like warm snow, and the genet, and the rocks, and the heather. Oh, don't send me to Quimper, to walk up and down with still, black sisters beside the great cathedral! Would you like to go away from the sea and the boats and the flame in the phare? Could you breathe? Could you live?"

"No," said Thymert positively.

"Well, then," remarked Guenn conclusively.

"But I was only suggesting it, Guenn. Who would force you to go? Not I, indeed."

"I should die without Nannic. I should die without the sea. But I will do anything you ask of me," yielding, womanlike, now that the danger was over.

"I ask nothing of you; I think myself you would pine in a cage. You are not much like the demoiselles, Guenn," he sighed.

"No: I am not like the demoiselles," she said complacently, stretching her feet out freely and tossing

her head. "And now," she went on confidentially and somewhat dictatorially, almost as if she were talking to Jeanne, "why did you want to send me off to stupid Quimper?"

He hesitated. "I have seen you running about all these years," slowly choosing his words; "I have not realized till lately that you were more than a child."

She looked curiously at him. Child, indeed, to the fastest workwoman in the Morot usine! Had he been any one else she would have interrupted him with a bold joke.

"I promised her to do my best for you."

Guenn's face softened instantly. "And that you have always done, monsieur le recteur," she said with an impulse of warm gratitude, seizing his hand and raising it to her lips respectfully, as if he were the gray-haired recteur of Plouvenec.

Thymert flushed and abruptly moved away. After a moment he continued: "You children are so far away, and I, a priest and a busy man, cannot—"

"We children are so far, and he a priest!" mocked Nannic. His pale face, leaning on his crossed arms, peered above a shelf of rock close behind the curé. Motionless, watchful, his sharp eyes were fixed upon Thymert. Guenn smiled her perfect approval. She was always glad when he came near her.

"That is precisely what I said, Nannic,"—the priest spoke authoritatively. "Be quiet, and don't interrupt me, if you wish to stay."

"She won't," returned Nannic derisively.

Thymert turned his back, and went on: "At best, men don't understand girls. Girls ought to have mothers. I am always sorry you have no mother, Guenn. You are more alone than other girls."

Guenn looked as if she did not understand. Nannic had crawled to the side. His malicious eyes never moved from the curé's face.

"Have I done anything that displeases you?" asked the young girl modestly. "Indeed, Monsieur Morot is content with me. He says I work always better and better."

"No, no, child! You have done nothing to displease me." This with exquisite tenderness. She looked at him wonderingly. "You are a brave good girl."

"Runs about freely at midnight as at noon," the stranger had said. He passed his hands nervously through his hair. Ah, how helpless he felt! "But after the work is over, and the day has been long and full of talk and jokes with the women and the men, and you go home that long, lonely way, — it is then that I mean."

"But I like that," said Guenn brightly. "If you have fine ears, you can hear the grass grow, and the herbs shoot up, and the trees stretch themselves. You can hear them best by the menhir. I suppose because the menhir itself is so still."

"But afterwards, at home, — if some one were waiting for you there?" persisted the priest.

"Oh, when I get home I am too tired and sleepy to think," laughed Guenn. "I just tumble into bed as fast as I can. Bed is the best place when you've been on your legs all day."

"Yet often I have stood in the chapel porch at night," he continued with great simplicity, "and looked at the bay lying out under the stars, and our phare shining out and meeting the light of the Plouvenec phare, and I have felt sorry that there was no one waiting for you."

"Comment?" said Guenn in innocent surprise.

"Our men take care of our fisher-girls. The jokes with the boys and the rough talk do no harm. But something new and strange might happen to you. Then if somebody were waiting at home, it would be better, don't you think so, Guenn?" tremulously. "You are so little and young," he said awkwardly. "It is a pity there is no woman near you," thinking of madame at the Voyageurs, her calmness, her wise eyes.

"Women!" remarked Guenn laconically, with a scornful remembrance of Mother Nives and the washing conclave, — "women, indeed!"

"But that is why I wanted to send you to the nuns."

Guenn lifted her pretty shoulders, as if she were shaking off the Cathedral of Quimper. "As if anybody needed to take care of me! As if I were a silly demoiselle! Have no fear for me," she nodded reassuringly; "I can look out for myself as well as any girl in Plouvenec, — or any gars either, for that matter. But you are good, and I know what you mean about nights. Sometimes I have thought myself how it would have been if she had lived, — I remember her face, you know, — how it would be to have somebody there to tell me I was an idle, useless thing, not worth my salt, looking all the time as if she did n't mean it. That's what Jeanne's mother does."

"Ah, then if anything troubled you, you could go to Jeanne's mother," Thymert said with eagerness, as if he had found at least the clew to the labyrinth.

"Why not?" indifferently. "She's good-natured, but they live miles away from me, and nothing ever does trouble me, monsieur le recteur."

"You like madame at the Voyageurs?" abruptly.

"Why, yes, of course. She made a tisane for me the other day. I like to bring her her fish. Of course

I like madame! Everybody does. And Mother Quaper," continued Guenn reflectively. "She's a jolly, good old soul. But perhaps they are none of them the kind you mean?" she said interrogatively, — "not the kind that wait for you nights, and let you talk to them about what has happened?"

"No," replied Thymert slowly, "they are not exactly the kind I mean, — perhaps not even madame at the Voyageurs."

"It will be nine years in May since she died," said Guenn gravely.

"Nine years."

"And you were only studying then, and I called you mon oncle Gabriel."

"Yes, you called me uncle then."

"And do you remember the Pardon at Fouesnant? I was naughty, and cried. You lifted me up and carried me on your shoulder. You gave me a mirliton."

"You were tired. You were so little, and had walked so far. You were not naughty; you were only unhappy." He had been always blind to Guenn's naughtiness, early and late. "But do you remember all that? Why, you could not have been more than four years old; and I was a great boy of fourteen, — a strong fellow, already like a man.

"I remember it well; there are only a few things I remember better," — her face darkened. "But that day at Fouesnant! I can see the procession with the crosses and the banners, I can almost hear the chanting."

"I too," said Nannic solemnly, "I remember it."

"Why, you were not born," cried Guenn with peals of rich laughter.

"I remember," persisted Nannic. "You said, 'Merci, mon oncle.' He carried you above the crowd."

Guenn shrugged her shoulders in comical resignation.

"Nannic," said the curé, amused, "you remember more than there ever was. How would you like to come over to the Lannions and live with me and help Erec? We are not so wise as you over there; it might do you good."

But Nannic was already scrambling resentfully down the rocks. He objected to laughter directed against himself; he liked to be treated as something supernatural and incomprehensible. Thymert's matter-of-fact good-humor offended him.

"I'll go and live with the other one," he called angrily, with no attempt at mystification.

"The other one?" The curé looked inquiringly at Guenn.

"It's Monsieur Hamor," she replied with a frown.

"Nannic likes him, — heaven knows why."

He paused an instant, then rejoined: "Monsieur Hamor is very amiable. One cannot in justice say the contrary."

"You know him?" the young girl asked abruptly.

"Yes; do you?"

"How can one help it? One sees him everywhere." She shook her head impatiently.

He said nothing, but looked glad.

"I hate new faces and strange voices. Why should they come here! I love my people."

"Guenn," exclaimed Thymert, with a warm gleam in his eyes, "we are Bretons, you and I."

He was happier than he had been in many days. He looked suddenly boyish and free from care.

"Nannic always calls him *the other one*. Nannic is so strange," said Guenn with uneasiness.

"He is only fanciful."

"You cannot judge how strange he is unless you live with him," she continued thoughtfully. "He says, if you like any one your heart aches."

"Well, it does ache. Nannic is right there."

"And he says his back aches and his legs ache, and that's ache enough. That's the reason he won't like anybody."

"Poor little gamin! Poor Nannic!"

"But I think he likes me all the same," Guenn said contentedly; "and if he does n't it's no matter: he is my Nannic, he can do what he pleases."

The curé was evidently not concentrating his thoughts upon Nannic. He rose and looked out on the bay.

"See! There's Meurice coming in. I wonder what he's got," she pointed to a sail far away.

He turned and examined her slowly from head to foot. She was lying as softly against the rock as if she were a bit of moss, — sabots easily crossed, red kerchief neatly pinned, faded old skirts clinging to her closely, brown hands knitting incessantly, and never receiving a glance from the beautiful eyes frankly upturned to his.

"I have a prettier one," she said innocently, "but I like the old one better. Did you tell him to buy it?"

"I? No," he smiled kindly, "I said nothing about a kerchief."

Again his grave glance scrutinized her. "It's as patched as patched can be, isn't it?" and Guenn laughed heartily, lifting her skirt and looking at it with extreme amusement. "Nobody knows what the first dress was but me, and I've almost forgotten myself. That's a nice bit; that's my favorite patch; Madame at the Voyageurs gave it to me." She subjected herself to a thorough supervision. "It can't hang together

much longer, you see," calmly putting her finger through a weak spot; "well, it's all the same to me," she added philosophically, smoothing it over her knees.

"The artists want you to pose for them," he said abruptly.

"I'll see them hanged first!" she exclaimed in her rudest way.

"Monsieur Hamor wants you."

She colored angrily. "Fool! I hate him."

"I knew it! I only wanted to hear you say so. Let us not talk about them," — hurriedly.

Guenn stared. "Well, I'm sure I don't want to talk about them!"

Leading up gently to an important question was obviously not one of Thymert's accomplishments. Suddenly and with shyness and effort he said: "How would you like to be married?"

Guenn broke into uncontrollable laughter. He waited patiently, smiling a little.

When she could speak, she said, laughing still: "It is so droll. First I was to go to Quimper; that was bad enough! Now I am to be married; that is worse! Pardon, monsieur le recteur, but I can't help laughing. What is coming next?"

"Laugh, child, laugh!"

"Well, if you really want to know, I should n't like it at all," she said with positiveness.

"But many girls as young as you marry," he urged shyly.

"Oh, dear, yes, younger," Guenn assented bluntly, as unembarrassed as any old nurse. "Annaïc married at fifteen. She's got four children; three are alive and one is dead. I saw him, the poor little *bambin*. He was so white, and his little hand was so cold. I

felt of it. Annaïc cried all night ; I should n't like that ; oh dear, no ! ”

“ I am dull about these things,” he said, always with the same shyness. “ But it seems to me it is right to speak with you. It seems to me, if you had a mother, it would all be different. Now there is Alain ! ”

“ Alain ! Oh, dear ! oh, dear ! ” Again she laughed irrepressibly.

“ And yet, last night I looked across the bay, and wished you were Alain's wife. I wished you were safe in any honest man's home.”

His kindness touched and sobered the girl. “ It was good of you,” she said gently. “ Only,” smiling roguishly, “ I don't want him, thank you.”

“ There are so many waiting for you.”

“ Let them wait — ”

“ But, Guenn — ”

“ Now listen, monsieur le recteur.” She folded her arms resolutely, and looked him in the face. “ You are good to me. You are not like the men. Alain would kiss me,” — her clear eyes did not falter as she said this, but Thymert's sank a moment, — “ only he would beat me when he was drunk. You know it yourself. Why waste our breath ? I will tell you this, — only you, — I have had blows enough,” she muttered fiercely, “ and if another man should beat me, I would murder him ! ”

Thymert grew pale. “ O my God,” he said under his breath. His whole soul looked out of his pathetic eyes at the young girl who had passionately spoken these brutal truths. “ Tell me, Guenn,” — his voice low and hoarse, — “ has he been bad again ? Has he — ”

"Never mind," said the girl curtly. "I've said enough," — closing her lips obstinately.

"Well," she went on, recovering herself, "since it is you, I will say it. Alain is a good fellow. I will dance the gavotte with him, raise the weights with him, race with him, laugh with him; but *marry* him? never! Why should I marry, and grow old before my time! Bah!"

"Guenn, child, — all men are not like him. It is no wonder that you judge by what you know best; but there is many a brave fellow who would be good to you," he pleaded fervently, "and who would keep you safe — safe."

"What has old Jacqueline of her twelve children?" she demanded boldly. "Eight brave sons drowned. And once she was young like me, strong like me, pretty like me. And she toils on at seventy, and hears the waves at night and does not die!" Guenn clasped her hands above her head and rocked herself to and fro.

"She has suffered, and been faithful," said Thymert with a solemn and tender voice. "She will be comforted. All her pain will be as nothing, when she meets her eight sons in heaven."

"But she has had it all the same," persisted the girl.

"And Jacqueline is only one. And why should you not take some good heart and be content?"

"Don't want any good heart," she answered doggedly.

"What do you want, child?"

"What do I want? Well, I never thought," she answered indifferently. "Did the bon dieu ask me if I wanted to be here at all?" with an irreverent little shrug. "I found myself here, and had to go on, whether or no."

But since it is you, I will tell you what I want." She paused, then went on with spirit: "I want to laugh a little longer; to be young and strong and the prettiest girl in Plouvenec a little longer; to sing and dance the gavotte with Alain and the other fellows; and pack sardines the fastest, and buy best for Monsieur Morot; and hear them say, 'Oh, yes, that's Guenn, — only Guenn can do that, — c'est bien elle;' and see the boats come over the bay like a flock of birds; and joke with the sailors; and have you come to talk with me like this, monsieur le recteur, because you are so good and kind," — she said with a pretty graciousness; "and of course always have Nannie near me. All this, a little longer! And then I should like to go off suddenly like a sailor, — without any fuss, you know," she exclaimed brightly. "And the people would say, 'Why, where's Guenn Rodellec?'" and look at each other. Mother Quaper and Mother Nives would actually stop quarrelling a few moments; and madame at the Voyageurs would raise her eyebrows to see another girl come with the fish. They would be sorry. But there would be no fuss. Why should I not be like a Breton sailor? Is n't it better than to be like Jacqueline, with her eight boys drowned? Oh yes! I would rather be a sailor, and drown in a gale off Penmarch, than the sailor's old mother, working and waiting on shore. It is easier for the boys. I will be a boy, and if not quite a boy, — at least I am Guenn Rodellec!"

Her impassioned face, her clear young voice, moved him unspeakably. And was it not true, for the most part, what she said? He was a simple man, whose work was with rough facts, not with theories. It was natural that women should be gay girls, then suddenly careworn wives, — household drudges.

It was natural that men should keep their youth better than women, that there should be merry-makings and mourning, much drinking and fighting, hard work, rough play, laughter and tears. It was natural that blows and children should be too frequent among the poor, that the bravest and best should never come back from the sea that nourished and devoured the Breton folk. Did he not know all this? Had he not lived his life among such things? Was he not giving the strength of his young manhood to his brothers, helping them not only with his holy office, but with his heart and his hands? But that a mere girl could stand apart and judge it all, he had not known. Was it not true, then, what she had said? Why should he try to send Guenn Rodellec to Quimper? She was more of a woman than the nuns. Why should he try to marry her off? His pulses had bounded as she spoke. He had a keen comprehension, both of what she said and what she left unsaid. It did not occur to him at the moment to refer her to the Church. The sailor-curé, it must be confessed, did not keep the ropes of his theology quite tant. In a more captious ecclesiastical neighborhood he would have fallen into dire disgrace for laxity of form. But Thymert was literally a fisher of men. He had saved so many poor fellows at the risk of his life, had had so frequent occasion to apply flannel, brandy, and mechanical friction to the chill bodies of his brothers that he sometimes forgot or had not time for spiritual counter-irritants.

Guenn's words struck powerful chords in his responsive heart. He saw thousands of brave fellows lost at sea, — he heard wailings from innumerable haggard women along the Breton coasts.

Meanwhile the little knitter was looking earnestly at him.

"And now you understand, monsieur le recteur."

"And now I understand."

"Must you go?" she said, as the full length of the old soutane towered above her.

She sprang up lightly, stretched both arms, and gave a series of little kicks with one foot, then the other.

"When you sit still so long, you have to find yourself again," she remarked gayly, continuing her process of finding herself. "It's the way a cat does, isn't it?"

She was all color and warmth, as she looked up at him, — vivid cheeks, brilliant eyes, bits of bright hair blowing in the wind of her coiffe, smiling in the prettiest way and showing her small square teeth, — smoothing her red kerchief with both hands, then resting them comfortably on her hips. The priest stood, tall and dark, beside her.

"Take care of yourself, Guenn."

"Oh, dear, yes."

"I wish I could feel that you were safe —"

"Safe! Well, if anybody is safe, it's Guenn Rodellec. Ask the others, monsieur le recteur. They will tell you a thing or two." She laughed mischievously. "It's only fair to say that I'm more decent with you. I can't help that. It's because you are so good. But sometimes, I'm a perfect little *diable*." She nodded repeatedly to convince him of the completeness of her iniquity.

He hardly heard what she said. He felt as if rainbow brightness was before him on the gray cliff. He must leave it, must lose it. His thoughts were wandering and confused. He had accomplished nothing. Well — was there anything to fear? It was all so vague.

And there was Guenn at his side, — self-reliant, full of daring, honest and merry.

“If I can ever help you, Guenn, you will tell me. If you are ever in trouble, if you ever feel alone, if anything happens, and you are not sure and bright as to-day, and you don’t know what to do or where to go, come to me, child.” His dark face was wistful as a woman’s.

“I will,” said the girl gravely. Something in his manner awed her in spite of herself.

“Is it a promise?”

“It’s a good Breton promise!” She lifted her hand with energy and brought it down hard in his outstretched palm. “If I ever need help, I will come to you as surely as the winds and waves come to the Lannions. You will shrive me and I shall be shriven. Now are you satisfied?” Her hand was clasping his firmly. Her bold, honest eyes looked him squarely in the face.

“It’s a promise,” she said again. “I never made a promise before. I hate promises. The people who are all the time promising are all the time lying.” She scowled and curled her lips scornfully, reflecting upon the conduct of a near relative. “You see, when anybody wants anything of me, I just say *même chose*, and do it if I can. But I won’t promise: I’ve heard too many of the slippery things. They make me sick. Bah!”

All the time, her hand, like a frank boy’s, grasped his. “But this is different,” warmly. “You are good to me. You are good to the whole world. I would like to do something for you. I would like to show you that I know how good you are to me, *monsieur le recteur*. And so I’m glad to promise, though,” laughing, “I do think it’s absurd. I’m afraid of nothing, you know: I can take care of myself. But I promise all the same. There!” and she gave his hand a vigorous shake.

Suddenly she began to examine it deliberately and with a curious expression. It was strong, brown, much used, hard-skinned, with broken nails and old scars and recent cuts on the knuckles.

She looked up cheerfully. "That's the right kind of a hand. It's a good Breton hand. I hate the other kind."

Thymert neither knew nor cared what she meant. He drew his hand slowly away, looking lingeringly at the young girl.

"It has been pleasant," he said gently.

"Yes, has n't it?" she returned with satisfaction.

"Adieu, Guenn." His eyes looked a solemn farewell.

"Adieu, monsieur le recteur," — smiling brilliantly.

"God bless you, child!"

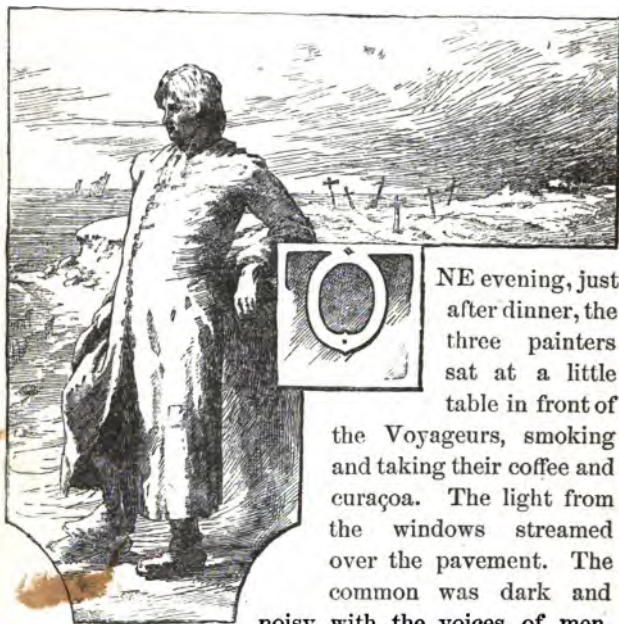
He turned abruptly and went. She watched him a moment, going away from her down the rocks. He did not look back. He reached the beach, and strode on rapidly, the old soutane making him a black, lonely figure on the white sands.

"Le bon recteur!" said Guenn lightly, and ran to find the others.

There was no storm that night, yet the curé of the Lannions paced his chapel till dawn, — and did not repeat his Virgil.



CHAPTER XI.



ONE evening, just after dinner, the three painters sat at a little table in front of the Voyageurs, smoking and taking their coffee and curaçoa. The light from the windows streamed over the pavement. The common was dark and noisy with the voices of men.

The fort was a lowering black mass. Along the other shore, the lights were nailing the land down to the water with long golden nails. Ragged, grinning children were hovering about the tables, greedy for sous and lumps of sugar, quarrelling and rolling over one

another, in the dust, when anything was flung to them. The white coiffes of a half-dozen girls gleamed at a little distance, their figures indistinct, moving like vivacious phantoms, — their voices young and real.

“Don’t you call this rather cool?” asked Douglas.

“Fresh, — yes, — but I like it,” Hamor answered heartily,

“And lively,” Staunton said.

“Plouvenec makes more noise than Paris,” complained Douglas. “The first morning I was waked by that cursed market here on the common, I thought Bedlam had broken loose. A French pedler auctioning off a metre of ribbon is a dangerous lunatic.”

“Oh! I know the fellow you mean,” said Hamor. “He laughs deliciously, and sobs and implores, — all at the top of his voice. He comes every Monday morning regularly, and regularly every Monday morning, I long to choke him. I’ve got my eye on him. If ever I catch him alone in a *chemin creux*, — gare!”

“How those coiffes bob about! With my eyes half-shut,” he continued, looking through his eyelashes, “I see heads and no bodies.”

“Those girls have singularly pretty voices. I always like to hear them evenings,” Staunton remarked pleasantly.

The three listened an instant. From the rough Babel of the common, an oath in an innocent, happy voice, followed by a charming laugh, reached them.

“Ah, it’s Guenn Rodellec!” Hamor exclaimed. “I thought she must be there: the coiffes are so vivacious. They are playing some game.”

Again the pretty laugh pealed through the darkness.

“It’s the most delicious thing I ever heard,” Staunton said.

"It makes a man feel kindly towards the girl without seeing her," added Douglas.

"I always feel kindly towards Guenn Rodellec whether she laughs or not," remarked Hamor. "I should feel kindly, if she should attempt to poison me. There is nothing in life that could make me feel unkindly towards a creature built as she is, and with that face."

Douglas gave an equivocal "H'm!"

"It is curious how innocently the girl swears," Staunton said with an indulgent smile: "it ought to be shocking, you know."

"When I was teaching school out West," began Hamor; "come, now, Staunton, don't make an elevated railway of your eyebrows; you're a decent-looking fellow when you keep them where they belong. I did teach school out West, you know, and it's one of the best things I ever did."

"My dear Hamor," protested Staunton, laughing, "I am sure I always find your reminiscences most edifying."

"When I was teaching school out West," Hamor went on gravely, "my youngest pupil was four years old. It was an academy of heterogeneous learning, you know. My oldest pupil was in conic sections. I was teaching the youngest to read. Her name was — no, upon the whole, I won't tell you her name. I've a sneaking fondness for that child still: she's going to be a pretty girl some time."

"The discretion of a man of honor; the sentiment does you credit," Staunton said with a wave of the hand.

"It was the name of a vine; I think I'll call her Mistletoe," Hamor continued soberly. "Well, I was teaching little Miss Mistletoe to read, and she knew *α*,

but failed utterly on *cow*. Have I told you that she was a beauty? Cherub type — golden curls — big blue, low-set, Celtic eyes, such as these Breton girls have. 'Surely you know this word,' I said, 'tell me what it is, my dear; you know it, I am sure.' Mistletoe raised her angelic face from her primer and smiled confidently. 'I'll be damned if I do,' she said very gently. So, you see, America can produce this sort of thing."

"America can produce most sorts of things," Staunton remarked civilly.

"As to this swearing," Hamor continued, "it is positively less offensive to me from these girls than slang from girls who ought to know better. That oath of Guenn Rodellec's just now, with her voice clear as crystal, — sounded less coarse than 'fast' society-talk."

He now began snapping lumps of sugar with his thumb and finger towards the boys, hovering around like birds of prey.

"You encourage those little vagabonds," Staunton said carelessly.

"Yes, that's what I want to do. I'm going to encourage one of them surprisingly. Wait."

Emboldened by the rain of sugar-lumps, the boys drew nearer. Hamor called many of them by name.

"Ah, there's my friend Kadoc. How are you, Kadoc?"

Kadoc grinned, looked sheepish, and said nothing.

"And Nannic, upon my word. How are you, Nannic?"

"How are you yourself?" replied the boy boldly.

"Gimme a cigarette," called a shrill voice, "and I'll stand on my head."

"He can't stand on his head worth a sou," sneered another; "let me stand on mine, m'sieu."

"I want the very best kind of a performance for my money," remarked Hamor gravely; "don't offer me any second-rate shows."

"Three-legged race, m'sieu?" "Sack-race, m'sieu?" "Wrestling, m'sieu?" shrieked a dozen boys, deeply excited by this unwonted notice.

"Everything, — your whole répertoire; but first I want some more cigarettes."

This was the signal for a general scrimmage, each insisting upon being chosen for the commission. Oaths, blows, and much rolling on the ground monopolized the whole assembly, except Nannic Rodellec, who stood apart and watched Hamor. The boy felt that a great and memorable moment was approaching.

At last Hamor succeeded in making himself heard. "Be quiet: behave yourselves," he called sternly.

"Send the noisy little brutes off, Hamor, won't you?" Staunton said, with a yawn.

"Not quite yet, Staunton, if you don't mind. Boys, stand in a row," he commanded.

They obeyed — fourteen ragged, dirty, grinning, eager little boys. What was the m'sieu going to do? The irregular line of vagabonds thrilled and swayed with excitement.

"Now," said Hamor solemnly, "the honest and good boys hold up their hands."

An eloquent pause, then awkward laughter and scuffling of feet, some in sabots, some bare. At length, from the end of the line, Nannic Rodellec, grinning from ear to ear, raised his long, misshapen arm. When this was perceived, a shout of derision burst from the others and every hand flew up.

"Ah, this is refreshing; fourteen honest, good boys! I never saw so many in my life before."

"Fourteen dirty little scoundrels!" commented Douglas. "Moreover you are offering a premium for hypocrisy."

"Oh, no! they know it's a joke as well as you do: look at their faces. Nannic Rodellec!"

Nannic stepped forward with grotesque dignity. The white coiffes had drawn nearer. Two girls, arm-in-arm, were bending forward, watching breathlessly.

At this moment madame's placid presence filled the doorway.

"Nannic, I think I would rather have you buy my cigarettes."

"I knew it," said the child gravely.

"In fact, you may always buy them for me."

Violent expressions of envy and disappointment echoed along the line.

"I knew you'd say that, too," observed Nannic.

"Did you, indeed? Well, that's clever! You take this paper and bring me the same brand, will you?"

"I know the kind you smoke," answered Nannic, disdaining the paper, his pale face fixed on Hamor's.

"If you know so much, tell me what I have in my hand."

The boy looked wizened and anxious; then he turned and scowled fiercely at the line of sneering, leering gamins waiting for his downfall. He cast another nervous glance at the strange messieurs whom he was longing to impress with his cleverness. There were Guenn and Jeanne, too, and madame in the doorway, and some people at the next table. It was a clear case of "thirty thousand foes before, and the broad flood behind;" only poor Nannic did not belong to that

grade of civilization in which schoolboys spout Macaulay's ballads, and therefore did not know how to define his conflicting emotions.

Hamor was watching him with a pleasant smile. It happened that the painter was holding his cigarette between two fingers, but Nannic could not read his face.

The child drew his breath and took the perilous leap. "Two francs," he announced in his shrill, audacious voice. Hamor opened his hand, and disclosed a two-franc piece. This was the proudest moment of Nannic's life.

The other boys, strong, large, swift of foot, stood abashed and open-mouthed. The little humpback was master of the situation. His eyes glittered, he remained motionless before the table, his long arms hanging straight down at his sides.

Hamor laughed heartily. "Nannic, we are kindred spirits, — we believe in ourselves. Here," — giving him the money. "Now why do you suppose I trust you with all that? Because I think you're honest?"

The boy, dropping his rôle of prophet and seer, with a flash of natural humor, stepped nearer and lowered his voice.

"Because you know I'm the only fellow in Plouvenec that can't cheat the police," pointing significantly at his own back.

"Right again, Nannic. We are friends for life. Now go."

The two girls came always nearer and nearer. Hamor appeared not to see them.

Madame stood tranquilly in the doorway, enjoying the beauty of the night.

Staunton had been patiently waiting for Hamor's freak

to die a natural death. Looking up, he suddenly saw the two coiffes, and smiled. "It's beginning to dawn upon me that what I've been taking for a roaring farce is after all fine strategy; but it's a bore all the same, you know."

"I'm not through yet," laughed Hamor. The line was writhing in impatience. "Here, you Legion of Honor, now it's your turn. Attention! Right wheel, halt! When I say *three*, start. The race is open to all," — holding his watch in his hand. "Round the corner to the road by the bay, down to the lighthouse, home along the quay. Purse will be collected while you're gone."

"Oh, I'll contribute generously," said Staunton. "I'm always ready to pay high for their absence."

"But there are some beauties among them," Hamor rejoined earnestly. "Two I want for my group. I like them to feel easy with me, you know. Look at that big one, ready for the start. Look at his pose, his legs, his bare chest, and his strained expression. I never saw anything so good."

"He is good," assented Douglas. "I've been watching him."

"Now, boys, run fair; no pushing, no tricks. I won't listen to any complaints. Three prizes. Nannic shall be umpire. One, two, three, — Go!"

Off went the ragged horde like deer. Two boys remained behind. "Why didn't you run?" asked Hamor.

They looked foolishly at each other. "I'm saving up for the wrestling, m'sieur," said one.

"Ah, very good."

"Kadoc will come in first anyhow, m'sieur," the second boy explained, "on a long race, you know, m'sieur;

but if you'll have a short one, I don't mind running with him myself, m'sieur."

"Thanks," said Hamor politely. "I'm sure you are very kind."

"You see you are expected to organize a complete circus," Staunton remarked. "I congratulate you."

"Well, it's a very good puppet-show so far. What wires are you going to pull now?" inquired Douglas.

"I am reflecting." He saw perfectly that the two girls at the side were very near him. "Nannic must collect the purse," he said in French. "They'll give some sous at that table, and more in the café."

Guenn Rodellec was instantly at his elbow, looking threateningly at him. Jeanne hung on her arm. Madame came quietly from the doorway, and stood behind them.

"I wish you'd let my brother alone!" Guenn exclaimed passionately.

"Why, Guenn, are you there? Good-evening." His voice expressed pleased surprise. "And Jeanne too! Are you waiting to see the boys come up?"

"What do I care about the boys? I tell you to let my Nannic alone," she cried in a hard, imperious voice.

"Guenn," began Hamor kindly.

"You were laughing at him, I tell you. You were mocking, — you know you were! I saw your face." She stamped her foot. Her voice trembled.

"My dear child, you really misunderstand. I was doing nothing of the kind. I am rather inclined to think Nannic was laughing at me." Then very gently: "Think, Guenn, have I done anything but give him a pleasure? He cannot run races; he cannot wrestle; he cannot stand on his head; he is not like the others, — poor Nannic; but he likes to go about with them, and

he bears many a hard knock and push and taunt, merely that he may keep his place in the ranks. Well, I have made him happy, that is all. He likes to feel important. We all do. Have I done any harm?"

She stood listening as if under a spell, — breathing hard, her eyes dilated, staring at Hamor, pulling nervously at her apron. His voice was both laughing and tender. It was true, what he said of Nannic, perfectly true. It was what she felt, but no one had ever expressed it in words to her before. She was sorry, — generous enough to wish to say so, — but she could not speak.

"How can you be angry, Guenn?" said the tender voice. "Would I hurt Nannic? Absurd, child — absurd."

Hot tears started to her eyes. She stood helpless and ashamed. "You beauty!" thought Hamor.

"Monsieur is too amiable to hurt anybody, I am sure," said madame's passionless tone from behind them; "and, Guenn, the gentlemen must amuse themselves in their own way. Their ways are not our ways. Come, mes enfants" — laying hands of quiet proprietorship on the shoulders of the two girls. "I have something to show you. Good-evening, gentlemen. Amuse yourselves well. You make the boys happy and it is a pleasant evening for a little sport. The season holds well, messieurs, — happily —"

She walked the young girls towards the door. Guenn felt that she was being morally influenced, as well as physically propelled. It was madame, — yes. But that soft pressure on the red kerchief was new to the girl. The weight of it was irksome to her rebellious heart. She drew up her shoulder with a little impatient movement. Madame smiled and would not be

shaken off. Guenn, like Lot's wife, looked back. She saw Nannic bringing the cigarettes, and giving them to Hamor with an important air, — the pale malicious face excited and happy. He took his place confidently by Hamor's chair. With one bound she had escaped from the gentle captivity. Flushing, brilliant, beautiful, the light from the windows falling broadly upon her, she stood again by the surprised young men, "I was just *hateful!*" she exclaimed impetuously.

"Guenn," remonstrated Hamor.

"Well, I was," she said, and flew back to madame.

A long whistle was Douglas's only comment.

After a pause, Staunton took off his hat and said, gravely, "Salut!"

Hamor smiled.

"Nannic, collect the purse. You saw the boys go round the corner. Who's going to win?"

"Kadoc."

Madame convoyed the two girls to the kitchen at the back of the house, and quite removed from the revels. Jeanne was gentle and passive and not without pleasing anticipations. She knew the kitchen and madame. Guenn looked restless and moody.

"Why can't we go out and see the fun?" she demanded with suspicion.

"It was some lace I wanted to show you," began madame placidly. "I shall have a bit left for Sunday coiffes for you and Jeanne."

"Guenn likes lace," Jeanne suggested pacifically.

"Yes, but it's lively out there," Guenn muttered, scowling and twisting herself about.

"You would rather see the lace another time? It is a pretty pattern."

"It's fun to see the boys come up," said Guenn, hesitating.

"Let us go out then. It is quite immaterial to me. I had prepared a little pleasure for you, but it can wait." Calm as she had led them in, she led them out.

"I like you, madame," cried Guenn impulsively. Madame laid her hand again on the young girl's shoulder. This time she did not try to shake it off. It was like a highly temperate caress.

Guenn stood quiet and tractable with madame by the door, the calm hand resting on her shoulder, and presently the bare feet of the runners sounded on the hard ground, and their dark forms began one after another to appear: first Kadoc, who threw himself panting on the earth; in a quarter of a minute young Meurice, who also dropped speechless; then the most of them in straggling fashion, with some bringing up an ignominious rear. These made loud explanations, to which no one listened, angrily demonstrating the occult causes of their failure. Hamor hushed them peremptorily. He began to take a boyish pleasure in his circus. More coiffes gathered by the bright doorway where madame stood like the goddess of wisdom, silent and all-seeing. Some men came over from the common, attracted by the excitement.

Alain was in a most maudlin state of romantic intoxication. He sidled up to Guenn and made a bold remark displeasing to her fancy. She turned with one of her swift motions, planted both hands on his breast, and gave him so strong a push that he staggered violently back. The men shouted, the girls laughed, — Guenn resumed her position, her hands on her hips, nodding good-humoredly at madame and remarking, "He'll get as much every time."

Madame smiled. There was no danger in this. Thy-

mert himself would have no fear of Guenn's roughest joke with Alain. Madame was not imaginative, but to-night Thymert's dark troubled eyes presented themselves vividly before her.

Meanwhile Hamor was organizing his athletic sports. Nannic Rodellec gave clever suggestions and information, classifying the boys impartially, burying all private animosity, his spirit mounting to the exalted occasion. He distributed the prizes with an urbanity never before observed in him. The boys were too much impressed to laugh. Only once did he forget the dignity of his rôle. A small fat boy who could not run, and whom disappointment had rendered bitter, struck Nannic in the face as he passed. Nannic's long arm returned the gratuitous blow with the rapidity of thought, but this silent exchange of courtesies in no way interfered with the able execution of his official duties.

Under the great oak on the edge of the common stood a group of older men, in shadow. Madame brought out a couple of lanterns which illumined the small wrestlers, stripped to their ragged shirts and trousers. Kadoc and Meurice, shoulder to shoulder, eye to eye, rough heads together, were closing with the energy of young bisons. The judge came out from the café and sat down by Hamor with a friendly and paternal air. From the darkness of the common, Mother Nives fixed upon him a leer of such dimensions that a sensitive organization would have felt ill at ease, in its unseen presence.

Mother Quaper was in brilliant spirits. Had not her Kadoc distinguished himself? All the women standing about in the dark were knitting. The night grew cooler and more cloudy, the fortress was a low frowning pile

of turrets and battlements, disclosing itself by the light of one feeble lantern on the drawbridge.

"How in — did my boy know that painter?" demanded Hervé Rodellec, leaning against the trunk of the great oak and smoking a short pipe. "That's what I want to know."

"Well, it's a mighty good thing to know the painters. It means a good many francs a month," his friend Hoël answered.

"I would n't ask a sou to know that fellow the way I want to know him," muttered Rodellec grimly; "only it is n't a way he would enjoy. He'd stop grinning then. It would be unhealthy for his grin."

"I don't know but I'd like to help spoil his grin too," remarked Loïc Nives. "What right has a strange gars to go grinning about here?"

"Oh, if he does n't do anything worse, let him grin on," said Hoël.

"But I tell you I don't like it," exclaimed young Nives with an oath. "Look at him now. Look at the girls staring at him. Jeanne and Guenn, — and all of them —"

"You're a brave lad, Loïc," Rodellec said with his cordial air, and a hearty slap on Nives's shoulder. "I wish I had a son like you."

"Well, I should like nothing better," Loïc answered awkwardly, laughing, and shuffling from one foot to another.

"We'll see, we'll see," Rodellec returned encouragingly. "I never force my motherless children; my wife is an angel now." He wiped his eyes piously. "I never force them; but we'll see, my boy —"

"Jeanne Ronan gets fifty francs a month," said Mother Quaper's voice near by. "It's a good bit now

that the usines are closed ; and as to the work, — well, it is nothing.”

“ Hein ? ” said Rodellec, pricking up his ears.

“ I suppose it’s sitting still and looking pretty, Madame Quaper,” returned another harsh voice from the group of women. “ That would be mighty hard work for some folks.”

“ You’re right there, Madame Nives,” retorted the Quaper, undisturbed. “ The young gentlemen don’t seem to trouble their heads much about any of us old women, but there’s a great difference between folks as was good-looking once, and folks as was n’t.”

A querulous voice began : “ There’s no accounting for their tastes. Is n’t my girl a fine plump wench ? Well, I brought her to them, to these very three at the table ; they are at Morot’s granary, you know. They thanked me, looked at her once over their shoulders ; one of them said she was not exactly the style of beauty he required. They all turned their backs, went on with their painting, and left me *plantée-là*. I explained it all to them, but they never opened their lips ; except when I went, that one at the right said, ‘ Good-day, madame,’ as smooth as you please. Everybody knows they want Guenn Rodellec. Now I don’t say Guenn has n’t a pretty face enough, and is n’t spry ; but my girl would make two of her, and no mistake.”

“ Hark ! ” said Rodellec again. “ Fifty francs, did they say ? ”

“ Yes, by weight,” answered Mother Quaper, with a broad laugh. “ Two of her by weight, sure enough. I can’t say I know what the painters want. I know my trade. It’s enough for one. I suppose they know theirs. It seems to pay better than washing. I wished I’d learned it when I was young. They are civil-

spoken, if they are a little cracked in the upper story; but if they only want weight, — well, there's a good many things they can paint, — things with horns, things with snouts, things with coiffes."

"Jeanne Ronan says they would pay Guenn any price," continued the jealous mother of the unsuccessful aspirant, following her train of thought unmoved by the general tittering.

"She'd better go and pose then, and not put on such airs," said another unsought maiden.

"I don't see why she's any better than anybody else," added a third, with a sniff. "She laughs in their faces."

"She's that proud," chimed in Marie, — "like a demoiselle, — my grandmother says —"

"Confound your grandmother, and all her brood," Mother Nives roared. "Whatever's the matter with Guenn, she can make a joke and a laugh, which is more than you stupid things can do, to save your silly souls —"

"And perhaps you can all boss Guenn Rodellec;" and Mother Quaper turned on the girls with her favorite tone of pleasing satire. "Perhaps you can tell the wind where to blow, the tide when to turn, monsieur le commandant how to sail the Merle, and" — grandly — "me and Madame Nives how to wash linen."

"Perhaps!" exclaimed Mother Nives, — her great voice hoarse, her soul flattered by this tribute from her colleague: "and perhaps it's your particular affair à vous what Guenn Rodellec does anyhow, and whether she earns sixty francs a month, or throws it in the painters' faces."

"Perhaps it's mine!" muttered Rodellec. "Sixty francs," he reflected. "What a fool I've been. And

then I can get at him easy. Sixty francs? Why have I never heard of this before? I thought it was a few sous the girls get. And she refuses, and tosses her head and laughs! Sixty francs, and the usine closed! By the blind eyes of Saint Hervé of Plouvenec! —”

The women moved on. Madame Nives and Madame Quaper, uniting only for sublime moments, had already reverted to their pristine isolation.

“Well, that’s a round sum of money to pay a girl for doing nothing. Don’t I wish I had a daughter,” Hoël chuckled.

Rodellec looked across to the door where Guenn stood in the full light. She was laughing, talking, moving vivaciously, knitting fast, happy in Nannic’s glory.

“Rodellec has more sense,” young Nives declared. “What’s the use of sending our girls to have their heads turned forever, so that they won’t look at a good fellow unless he’s all the time telling them how handsome they are. Is that what a girl is for? To put her up before you, like one of the blessed saints in church, and keep your distance? Well, that’s what our girls expect, after this cursed painter nonsense. I say a girl ought to have a civil tongue in her head, and consider herself lucky to get any man who sails his own boat. Fooling round with painters is n’t going to help her keep her house straight, and mind her babies;” and the young man shot sullen jealous glances at the whole bright scene before him.

“And I say,” said Hoël practically, “that sixty francs a month is n’t to be thrown out of the window for a whim; and if I had as handsome a lass as Guenn Rodellec, it would n’t be long before I’d send her marching straight to the first man who wanted her to

sit on a box and be looked at all day. There's no harm in that, is there? An honest penny is an honest penny, worth having wherever you find it. And mark my words. If a man is man enough to sail his own boat, it won't take him long to turn a girl's head back to the house and the babies." He laughed loud at his own wit. Rodellec joined in pleasantly.

"Well, well," he said with bluff good-humor, "I don't deny it would be a help, and the winter coming on; but my girl may do as she will. Leave the young things free,—that's my motto,—leave the young things free.—Sixty francs," he thought,—“and she, little fool over there, tossing her head, and going on as if nothing was the matter! Laughs in their faces, does she?”

"Come down," he said to the others, with a nod towards the distant orange-colored glass door. "I've had enough of this."

"Well, I'm going over there where Alain is, and the other fellows," Nives answered awkwardly.

"To hang round the girls and watch the strange gars," laughed Hoël. "Well, a lad must be a lad and follow the coiffes; but we fellows know what's better, eh, Rodellec?"

Rodellec smiled benevolently upon Loïc's ugly face.

"Go over there," nodding wisely, "you are a match for any of them, Loïc. You tell me what goes on." Loïc crossed the road to the group of neglected swains who stood disconsolately in the background of the merry-making, at a little distance from the door. The girls conspicuously ignored their presence, lavishing an exasperating degree of attention upon every movement of the painters. Guenn leaned carelessly against the house, her hands clasped behind her head,—

"Ah, mon dieu, que la vie est amère!"

she sang with her happy voice.

"It's a very good thing I'm not at school at Quimper," she said suddenly to madame and Jeanne with a bright laugh. "It would n't be half so gay as this."

"Quimper!" exclaimed Jeanne — "You!"

"Did n't I tell you? It was the good Thymert who wished to send me;" and Guenn leaned still more nonchalantly against the door-post. Hamor moved his chair slightly, that he might observe her at his ease, while obviously occupying himself with his ragged battalion.

Madame breathed a soft and prolonged "A — h —"

"Well, I never!" cried Jeanne, making large eyes.

"Même chose," said Guenn, "since I'm here — all of me!" — looking down at herself complacently. "And it was good of him, you know," with quick regret that she had mentioned lightly a matter which the priest had regarded with earnestness.

"I don't understand," began Jeanne.

"And it is not at all necessary that you should," Guenn remarked grandly. "It would be very impudent of any of us to even try to understand monsieur le recteur of the Lannions."

Jeanne was thus authoritatively rebuked.

Madame smiled, but said not a word. If Thymert had failed, she could do nothing in this case. Yet it was not a bad idea, this Quimper scheme. The main thing was not to seem to act.

Guenn laughed and sang and made audacious comments. She answered the judge somewhat bluntly as he went by; gave Alain a good-humored smile, to show him that she cherished no rancune against an old comrade; bestowed only a haughty stare and a shrug upon

poor Loïc; lorded it over Jeanne; was gentle and as civil as she knew how to be—which was indeed not always too civil—towards madame; and leaned and crossed her sabots, and smoothed her kerchief, and tossed her head, and threw herself into a dozen bewitching attitudes in as many minutes. All the time she never lost a word or look of Hamor's, not one smile that he gave Nannic, not a tone of his pleasant voice as he commanded or bantered his grinning little tattered forces, not a gesture of the fine long hands.

"There is no harm as yet," thought madame; "but she has excited eyes, and she sees only him."

"I don't know why I am such a fool as to feel sorry for the little thing," reflected Staunton, "and I don't know why I've hoped all along that he would n't get her. It's all right of course."

Hamor was possessed by a rapture of enthusiasm. "What shall I do first with her?" he thought. "Every moment of hers is an inspiration. She never strikes a false note. I feel that I shall do some good work."

It grew late. Staunton got up with an air of exhausted politeness and proposed a rubber of whist with a friend at the Grand. Hamor ordered his riotous mob to disperse. The boys withdrew to the blackness of the common for a vociferous summing up of joys and sous, preparatory to shooting off to their various homes, and finishing their acrobatic feats by climbing into the upper stories of the lits clos.

"Come round to-morrow, Nannic," Hamor said carelessly.

Nannic laid his arms on the table, and his head on his arms, looked at them all solemnly, and said: "I've been there before; I'm always there."

"I don't doubt it," said Hamor gravely: "but let me

see you to-morrow, will you? I don't always see you."

"I will," answered the child.

"Good-night, madame; good-night, Jeanne and Guenn."

Madame and Jeanne responded civilly to the three young men as they turned to go. Guenn said not a word; only looked at them boldly, smiling, a little defiant as usual. She felt that she had been quite amiable enough for one day. They need not expect anything more of her, any meek *good-evenings* and *yes-sirs*. She would leave all that to Jeanne. So she stared at them with glowing eyes, and a little mocking air, until they were gone, — chatting and laughing pleasantly as they crossed the dark common.

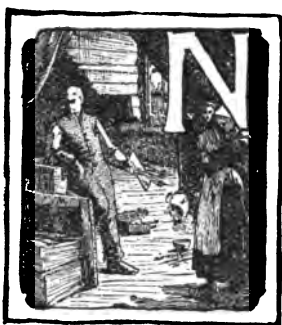
In the rough room in the corner of the island chapel Thymert sat alone; his Virgil lay open before him, but he was not listening to the silver voice. His candle flickered; he turned mechanically to snuff it, and saw a winding-sheet in the flame. The waves fell with a sullen, hollow sound, and on the winds were cries of warning and pain. The young priest passed out into the night, and walked through the sad little grave-yard. In the dark, his accustomed feet respected each poor mound, and his heart gave its instinctive benediction to his dead sailors. There was a sense of companionship in feeling them near, for Thymert was lonely and oppressed by vague fears, and even the child Erec was not there to-night, to sleep his healthy sleep in the long passage that led to the sacristy, and with the rise and fall of his peaceful breath to infuse an atmosphere of home and warmth under those wind-swept eaves. To-night the brown cheek was absent from the coarse pillow, and Thymert as he passed had no cause to shade his

candle and walk softly with a beautiful tender smile on his dark face. No, he was alone, except for these quiet sleepers. The clouds hung low over the Penfret phare. The Plouvenec light he could not see. He missed to-night the greeting and response which one tower was wont to flash across the bay to the other, drawing the desolate islands nearer to the kindly land.

He turned towards the open sea. The winds swept his long black hair back from his face. He folded his arms across his breast, and stood motionless. Like the sadness and unrest, the longing and mystery of the unfathomable ocean were the mighty surges of his unfathomable young human heart.



CHAPTER XII.



NANNIC RODELLEC, leaning upon a wet cart-wheel, resting his wizened face upon his arms, like a caricature of the smaller angel of the Sistine Madonna, was the first object that met Hamor's gaze when, at eight o'clock the next morning, in a fine rain, he went to his atelier. The child nodded gravely,

watched him with a serious air as he unlocked the gate, then followed him across the court, up the broken stairway, into the studio, as if it were all an oft-told tale. Hamor was himself in a silent mood, and as soon as Jeanne came shyly in, a few moments later, grew deeply absorbed in his work. Nannic's infallible instinct for finding places that would support him comfortably led him to a pile of boxes where his heavy head rested on his arms in the usual way, and his eyes alone moved, glancing sharply from the painter to the canvas and the model. To Jeanne's familiar merry looks he deigned no response; but as if he were the genius of the place, brooding over its past and future, he remained motionless, enveloped in a vast thoughtfulness.

Hamor's face looked sterner and older than usual. He was working fast and frowning steadily. His mornings were not as his evenings, and unless the outer world made strong demands upon his vitality, it was usually inclined to be parsimonious rather than prodigal until after ten o'clock A. M. Neither his obedient and amiable little model nor the pale boy crouched on the boxes, whom indeed Hamor had for the moment quite forgotten, made any demands whatever upon him. So the frown between his eyes, and the pinched look round his nose, and the set mouth had their will; the sunny smiles and winning, kindly expressions were stored away out of sight for future use; and all that was resolute and hard in the nature of the man proclaimed itself.

The little humpbacked philosopher found much food for reflection. What was there about Jeanne that made Monsieur Hamor scowl? Why did he scowl at his canvas? How could a strong, well gars, who might be sailing his boat or smoking his pipe on the digue, care so much about making a picture of Jeanne Ronan, — in her every-day clothes, too, and not even her Sunday coiffe? Monsieur Hamor was evidently very much in earnest about something. Nannic's curiosity was enjoyably roused. However, he never permitted himself to exhibit the slightest surprise. In the studio there was much which was new and strange to him, but he trusted to time and his mother-wit to make everything clear. Meanwhile, he felt uncommonly comfortable. Nobody was hooting at him or slapping him, the boxes fitted his person to perfection, and he found the smiling Monsieur Hamor in his scowls an interesting if incomprehensible study.

After an hour, Hamor rose abruptly, knocking over his camp-stool, — went to the chimney upon which the

fire spirit was now airily soaring, and from the cigarettes and matches lying loosely upon the mantelpiece helped himself, all the time eying his work discontentedly. "The whole thing needs potatoing and oiling out," he muttered. Suddenly he saw Nannic leaning forward like a grinning gargoyle. "Oh!" he said, surprised. Then he smiled with amusement. "Nannic, are you comfortable? Are you all right? Does it amuse you up here? It's rather dull, isn't it? You look as if you grew on these boxes."

"I am thinking," answered the child sententiously.

"Well, think then; and if there's anything you want, tell me," Hamor said abruptly, but kindly. "Come, Jeanne. Again, posez!"

"She's coming," announced the motionless boy after a pause.

"Who? Guenn?" asked Hamor, turning eagerly. Nannic, without changing his attitude, lifted a long bony hand and pointed with one wise finger towards the court. Hamor glanced down involuntarily, saw nothing but wagons in a fine rain, the familiar fence, lane, and buildings. He looked curiously at Nannic, then resumed work. Nannic responded only by his inscrutable Gothic grin.

The magnets in the granary had drawn Guenn as far as the great arch of the entrance to the courtyard. The rain was falling in a dreary, hopeless way on the irregular stones of the pavement; on the still grayish house with faded green blinds and lilac bushes before the front windows; on the yellow and red omnibus with its weary wheels drawn up beneath it; on the long low roof of the wheelwright's shop, dimming the gold of the lichens. A cat came slowly down the stairway. Its feet sounded curiously heavy and regular. It stopped two or three

stairs above Guenn's head, and regarded her solemnly. She called it gently, and wished it would come near enough for her to stroke it. But it turned away, carrying its tail like a flagstaff, and went up the stairway with the same soft, unsympathetic precision. When she peered out into the rain she could see the three dormer windows of the granary, with the dusty broken panes; but she could see nothing of her Nannic, or of Jeanne or Monsieur Hamor, and she was careful to keep well out of sight. It was not far to Morot's usine. In a loft near by, some girls whom she knew were mending nets. They were quiet girls, invalids more or less, — called good because not strong enough to be wild or noisy. Guenn, with a bombshell effect, burst in among them. The conversation, which had been brisk enough before, began to drag perceptibly. Guenn with gathering discontent watched the four pale girls sitting in low chairs before the blue nets drawn out in long, narrow shapes like shrouds. Balls of twine lay on the floor, and soft piles of netting; the light from the windows behind streamed upon their bowed shoulders in sober kerchiefs, and their white coiffes. Guenn was out of place here, and she knew it. She had never heard of what young ladies call a sympathetic atmosphere, and did not know how to discourse about attraction and repulsion; but these staid, diligent girls made her feel cross and uncomfortable. They seemed as old as old women, and as far away from her. Certainly they were not overjoyed at the appearance of this bright young thing in their midst. She had interrupted their piquant recitals, in which, indeed, she herself had figured largely; and then she was so brilliantly, audaciously well. "Why, they are as stupid as the cat," she thought, feeling again the slight sense of disappointment which had fol-

lowed pussy's orderly retreat. "It would be like this with the nuns at Quimper, I suppose." She tried to talk a little, but the conversation languished and died.

"Well, there's no fun in you, I must say," she remarked not ill-naturedly. "I'm off!"

The oldest girl raised her head. She was a sickly, unpleasant-looking young woman, whose self-righteousness consoled her for many evils: "We are not always expecting fun," she said reprovingly; "we always have our duty."

Guenn turned on the threshold with a bright little laugh. "All right," she answered, shrugging her pretty shoulders; "you may have the duty: I'd rather have the fun. Adieu."

But, nevertheless, when she was out on the road again her face fell; and, indeed, she did not seem to be finding much fun this morning. Madame had already tried to keep her busy in the Voyageurs' kitchen, but the girl had grown impatient of chopping and pounding and grinding, and, seizing her opportunity, escaped. Her thoughts fixed themselves tenaciously upon the studio. What could Nannic be doing up there? He must like it or he would n't stay. If she could steal softly up the stairway and look in without being seen! It was strange to think of Nannic with a stranger. Jeanne was there as a matter of course. Monsieur Hamor was smiling and smiling, and painting with his long white fingers.

Poor little Guenn, standing again under the stone arch, felt strangely homesick and out in the cold. Yet nothing prevented her from opening the high gate and walking through the court and up the stairs and straight into the old granary, except — except what?

Indeed she did not know. She was not addicted to introspection. It never occurred to her to analyze these emotions that were making her uncomfortable and forlorn. She missed Nannic, — not that he was always with her, but at least she could always reach him when she chose to go to him. And now he was beyond her reach, unless she sacrificed all her traditions, her obstinately enunciated opinions, her defiant pride, or, as she would have said, unless she ate her words. Last night, when, as often happened, they told her late she would have to go down to the dram-shop for her father, and she had stolidly marched into the very midst of the orange light, and taken him by the arm among the men, — as other girls did commonly enough to their fathers, — and led his stumbling steps the long way home, mechanically, with neither sorrow, disgust, nor fear, the only intelligible word she heard from him was a constant refrain of “sixty francs — sixty francs.” This morning early she had heard the interpretation of his babbling, and had been peremptorily ordered to present herself without more ado at Hamor’s atelier, to engage herself as model for not less than sixty francs a month — and, if she was n’t a fool, she’d get seventy, Rodellec added. Parental authority was strong in Plouvenec. A man might be a drunkard and a knave, but his command to his child was as binding as that of a God-fearing, silver-haired patriarch among the dwellers in tents.

Guenn had turned pale as he spoke. She had not in her remembrance approached him with any petition. Now she begged as another girl might beg another father. “Father,” she said, — and it was the word she never used, — “don’t make me do it.”

“Fool!” returned Rodellec unrelentingly. Nannic

was curled up on the bench, his wise, heavy head leaning on the oaken table.

"I never asked you anything before," she went on in a fierce, shy way: "I'll never ask you anything again, surely: I only ask you this, — don't make me do it; don't send me to him — to this one. I'll go anywhere else; I'll pose for any of them," she cried desperately; "only not to him. There's a Frenchman at the Grand; he'll pay quite as much. Father!" The girl's voice was a prayer in the one unwonted word.

"You'll go to Hamor and to nobody else," said Rodellec doggedly.

"Nannic!" turning in strange appeal to the child.

"You will have to do it, Guenn; I see it coming — coming," he replied, impassive as fate itself. "It must be."

"I'll give you three days," growled Rodellec. "If you're not there by that time, I'll take you there myself."

The girl's hot spirit rose. "And if I won't!" She turned her defiant eyes boldly upon him with a scowl.

His answer was a blow. Guenn fell in a heap on the earthen floor. There was a curious snarl, but no word or motion, from the figure leaning on the table. Rodellec with an oath left the house. Guenn picked herself up, feeling a little dizzy, and bathed a bruise under her left temple.

"I'm going," said Nannic. "You'll come later — later." Presently he sidled into the house again. "Here," he said, holding out a couple of dried leaves; "they are from the Druid-stone. Put them on and it won't ache: I whispered to them."

She smiled gratefully. She was pleased that he cared: it was so seldom that Nannic seemed to care.

"Later," he said significantly, and went out.

Left alone, Guenn put the house in order, according to her conception of the word. There was little to be done, and that she did quickly. Then she went down to the village and wandered about aimlessly, with a curious oppression in her heart, and always the sense of being drawn nearer and nearer the place where her Nannic had gone to be with the smiling stranger. It was surely Nannic whom she wished to see, yet Hamor's face as it had looked last night, his high head with the light on it, his hand holding a cigarette, his smiles to the boys, his low, pleasant words which she could not understand, although she had listened so eagerly when he spoke to his friends, — all this was before her, a vivid and powerful vision, haunting her wherever she turned this dreary morning, drawing her towards itself. "How can you be angry, Guenn?" The girl trembled, remembering his voice. She had run about everywhere trying to forget it; but she heard it in madame's kitchen, and with the still menders of nets. Wherever she went the unrest in her heart grew greater, until for the third time that morning she found herself under the arch between the stables and house, looking listlessly at the wet omnibus, the wet lilac bushes, the wet roof: sometimes peering out and giving a stealthy glance up to the granary windows.

Nannic expected her: she knew that. Nannic had said, "You'll have to come." What if she should go up, — not to pose, of course, — only to look about once?

With this thought, all her blood seemed to course furiously through her veins, and all her savage opposition to Hamor rose up for one last effort. Did he smile last night? Well, had he not always smiled? From

that first evening on the beach, when she hated him for being a strange man and looking at her, had not his smile been in her thoughts by day, in her dreams by night? And she hated him still. Yes, she hated him. Because he made his voice sound like an angel's and said "Guenn!" until her heart beat fast, and she trembled like a leaf, was that any reason for not hating him? No. For that, she must hate him all the more. She remembered how she had refused him flatly in his face, how she had laughed and mocked with the women by the river, how all Plouvenec knew that Guenn Rodellec would not pose, though all the strangers on earth wanted her. Should she swallow her pride, and go in like another girl? Never? And her father? Her face grew sullen and heavy. The bruise on her cheek burned, and only strengthened her obstinacy. "Thymert will help me," she reflected. It was the first time that faithful friend had entered her troubled thoughts that morning. Guenn had a deep, if stolid instinct of obedience to her father, and a noble reserve that sought habitually to conceal from the world his brutality towards herself. But even this was over-mastered by the resurrection of her farouche and superstitious dread of yielding to Hamor's influence. She would go to Thymert. Thymert would understand. Thymert would take care of her. She had promised indeed to go to him if ever she was in trouble. Never before had she felt the need of protection. With the new sensation came a kindly grateful sentiment towards the priest, who she knew would stand with her, shoulder to shoulder, and resist these strangers, their smiles, their sweet tones, their foreign ways which she hated because she could not forget. As for her father, he always listened to the good curé. And if she got an extra blow afterwards for

interfering with the scheme, what would it matter? What was a bruise more or less, if only she, Guenn Rodellec, could keep her freedom, not go over to the foreigners, not yield to the strange feeling that was always drawing her, — drawing her against her will, like the quicksands on the lower coast.

She straightened herself, tossed her head, and turned to go, singing gayly her little song about the bitterness of life. For the moment, she felt like the old Guenn, careless, merry, buoyant. The good Thymert would make things right. Perhaps somebody was going out. She would look along the quay. The sailors were all kind to her. Somebody would surely take her over to the Lannions.

Did the cackling of geese save Rome? But who may estimate the loss and disaster and ruin caused by the cackling of geese ever since? At the moment when Guenn, bold and joyous of mien, was passing out of the archway, the tired little woman who from her window had seen the young girl coming and going three times, was moved to descend: "What do you want?" demanded the mistress of the premises not unkindly, yet with that glance of vague disapproval which a faded woman is apt to unconsciously bestow upon a beautiful, fresh, young girl.

"Nothing," answered Guenn, turning and facing her, ready for peace or ready for war — with perhaps a leaning towards the latter.

"Are you waiting for anybody?" demanded the little woman languidly.

"No," replied Guenn, with an aggressive look.

"Are you a model?" and her pale eyes studied, with a kind of weary curiosity, the bold and brilliant young face.

This catechism irritated Guenn. "No," she said fiercely.

"Do you want to be a model?" persisted the other.

Guenn laughed scornfully.

"Because," continued the tired little woman with mild fatuity, "I know Monsieur Hamor very well. He is very amiable, this Monsieur Hamor. He stands here and chats with me often." She looked affectionately about the archway and gave a small sigh of pleasing reminiscence. Guenn flushed warmly, and began to move about. She had a violent desire to push or shake this exasperating person. She wanted her to stop talking. She longed to hear more.

"He has such a beautiful, amiable smile, this Monsieur Hamor," — ah, how well Guenn knew that! — "it warms the heart to see it, and a kind voice one must say, and a happy bright face, when everything else is dull." She glanced at the familiar things about her, dull enough to-day in the drizzling rain, — "and if you want to be a model, — not that he has painted your kind yet," she said jealously. "I don't know as he likes your kind," — she looked discontentedly at the superb color in Guenn's face. "I would n't mind taking you up there. I have n't much to do this morning." She began to smooth her hair with her hands in anticipation.

"I must see Monsieur Hamor any way," the small garrulous voice went on: "I am going over to Quimper to-morrow. There's something he wants me to bring him from Quimper," — with importance. "If I should take you up, he would paint you. He paints everybody and everything, you know, and if you are afraid to go up alone, you need n't be afraid with me."

What perverse spirit suddenly possessed this harmless and insipid little person that she managed to combine in

her weak discourse all that was needful to destroy Guenn's rational plans, to turn her from her safe chosen path, to set the hot heart beating fast again, to re-establish the power of the old witchery, beckoning her on against her will? Guenn herself never knew why the wandering eyes, drawling voice, and complacent allusions to Hamor, nearly maddened her and started her off as if pursued by furies.

She interrupted the silly prattle with an imperious gesture, and one consuming look of utter scorn, then sprang past the foolish speaker into the lane, flung open the gate, and crossed the court with her long swift step. No dowager duchess with a train could be so majestic as this angry Breton girl, in her short patched skirts and clattering sabots, which, urged on by her ardent spirit, flew over the ground, as if they had wings. Up the broken stairway ran the light unhesitating feet. Without knocking,—Guenn knew how to knock, but the trifling ceremony was with her voluntary not obligatory,—she opened Hamor's door, and, sudden as a gust of wind, made her violent entrance into the old garret.

The gargoyle never moved. Jeanne's face expressed an innocent "Oh" of surprise. The vein in the middle of Hamor's forehead grew prominent. He did not turn his head. His hand worked mechanically on. He knew well who had come. Only old Boreas or Guenn Rodellec would dare sweep into a man's castle in this high and mighty way. It was evidently not Boreas, unless he had taken to wearing sabots, and to breathing very audibly with quick short breaths like a young girl under strong excitement.

"Would you mind shutting the door, Guenn?" he said pleasantly.

She did not move. He turned and looked over his

shoulder at her, kind, expectant, but not smiling. He did not at this crisis dare to risk the familiarity of a smile. Guenn was poised as lightly as any creature that flies: she was, in fact, leaning slightly towards the open door. Her arms hung straight down in front of her; her whole figure expressed tremulous lightness, only her hands were clinched nervously. She looked as if she might the next instant bound out into freedom as swiftly as she had darted into captivity. Hamor knew that if he lost her now, it would be forever.

"Shut it, please," he said again in a perfectly matter-of-fact tone as their eyes met; "it makes too much draught: the broken windows are bad enough."

Guenn's eyelids drooped before his steady gaze; her nervous little fingers relaxed; her spirit yielded. She turned, walked slowly towards the door, and with her own hand shut herself in—shut her old life forever out.

The gargoyles never moved; Jeanne looked innocently pleased; while Hamor, his back turned, breathed one long breath of relief and triumph.

Guenn stood irresolute by the closed door.

"Come and see me paint Jeanne," said the low, gentle voice, and Hamor motioned to a camp-stool near him.

Guenn stalked across the room mechanically and seated herself.

"It will not disturb me if you and Jeanne talk," Hamor said affably: "if it should, I will tell you. You see I am not painting her face just now." At the moment he was expending considerable technical skill on her coarse blue apron. He concentrated himself upon his work.

Guenn, still breathing quickly, her eyes looking very

large and excited, watched the strokes of his brush and palette-knife with at first about as much appreciation as any other untamed thing of the woods might feel before a work of art. But Hamor's earnest manner, the two familiar faces, the absence of any surprise at her presence and of any attempt to dictate to her, had a soothing effect. She began to look around curiously; then rose and walked up and down the atelier, regarding everything with her bold gaze; asking no questions, not even in Breton, of Jeanne. None of the models, whatever their manners in other respects left to be desired, were addicted to asking personal questions. *Nil admirari* seemed to be their one instinctive guiding principle: they declined to yield to surprise or admiration when brought face to face with the strangest things, and they listened to tales of other lands with a condescension which Hamor found delicious.

Bottles, cigarette-papers, pipes, tobacco-pouches, bowls and jugs, camp-stools and easels; Breton embroidery flung over a beam, pieces of rich-colored cashmere; boxes piled up, making a table resembling an altar, a dark-red cover concealing its humble extraction; a few choice books; an ancient long-necked vase, relic of seigneurial days, with "Dime" in blue letters on its cracked side; Hamor's favorite seat, a treasure cut out of a huge oak trunk, the base spreading by the fire and twisting like serpents, all black and polished by time; French yellow-covered novels, tossed in disgust under the eaves and left to lie where they fell, — in short, all the picturesque confusion of Monsieur Hamor's entourage, Guenn submitted to thorough inspection. Moreover she made free use of whichever sense the need of the moment seemed to indicate: lifting the Dime vase and smelling of it, feeling of the cretonne

draperies that hung on either side of the chimney. She stood long before the fire-spirit, — a very eccentric flight of Hamor's fancy. It evidently caused her profound thought. He smiled as he furtively watched the earnest uplifted eyes fixed upon so palpable a caprice. Guenn was, in fact, pitying the ignorance of foreigners and heathen who could worship this unknown deity.

There was a little fire on the hearth. An ember fell. The young girl knelt, seized the tongs, arranged the wood neatly, and looked for a brush.

"It's over there," said Jeanne in Breton, pointing to a distant corner.

"Nice place for it!" grumbled Guenn, running quickly to bring it. She did not try to go softly; her sabots clattered noisily over the rough floor. Nothing seemed to divert Monsieur Hamor's attention from his work, but when she had swept the hearth and deposited the brush somewhat emphatically in what she considered its legitimate place, he said very quietly, —

"Thanks, Guenn."

She smiled at him frankly. She found the atelier very agreeable. In the first place, it was large, — large enough to run races in, and she liked that. Then, it was obviously a place where you could do as you pleased. She went to the window and drummed cheerfully on a pane, then laughed her pretty, gay laugh, remembering the woman's amazed face left behind in the archway.

"You see, Jeanne," she began abruptly, "that little drawling fool down there wanted to bring me up. I just thought I'd bring myself." She laughed again, took out her knitting, sat on the broken stone window-seat, and chatted in the most unembarrassed manner in the world. Why should she not? There were

Jeanne and Nannic; and no one was annoying her in the slightest degree. She felt as free as air.

Monsieur Hamor did not intimate that he had any interest in the Breton conversation which his three guests now pursued with animation. He found Guenn bewitching, — her laughter, her freedom, her vivacity. As to manners, he asked himself seriously whether her untutored mode of investigation was not, upon the whole, more agreeable than the efforts young lady visitors usually made to please him, and to say something clever: using stereotyped art-phrases which they did not understand, and affecting a superhuman knowledge of technique.

Guenn did not stay long on the window-seat. She never stayed very long anywhere. Knitting, making abrupt remarks which convulsed Jeanne with merriment and produced deeper lines on the gargoyle's sculptured face, she stood looking over Hamor's shoulder at his painting. Ignorant as she was, she was too intelligent not to begin presently to feel a nascent perception of the magic of a stroke. She saw wonderingly how quickly something vanished that was there before, how something new appeared, how it grew in strength and beauty under his touch. She felt as a child may feel, without comprehending, the earnestness of the worker. It was something real to him, then, this picture-making. She watched him with eyes both shy and bold.

"What do you think of it?" said Hamor, throwing back his head and looking at her. "Is it like Jeanne?"

"Jeanne is never sad," she answered without hesitation. The picture was one of the innumerable peasant-studies which find their way to Paris, to sell well and adorn the walls of luxurious houses, where peasants are

myths. Jeanne was sitting on some boxes knitting, her hazel eyes looking at you over her work. The warm, transparent brown of the sloping roof made an effective background for her serious and simple figure.

"Sad?" Hamor looked curiously at his new critic.

"Jeanne's face is so," said Guenn in her rapid impulsive way, — making her hands broadly concave, — "not so," — straightening them.

"Ah, that is what you mean. It's not the face, Guenn. It's the mouth. Jeanne's mouth is not easy to paint."

Guenn nodded soberly as if that were a point she could easily comprehend, and watched him introduce a suggestion of levity into the corners of the unsatisfactory feature. "This kind of mouth," reflected Hamor, tipping up the right corner, "is awkward, because it expresses so little. The young unformed, untried mouth, with the innocence of childhood lingering in it, and" — tipping up the left corner — "the vague tendency to coarseness hovering over it, and all its lines unsettled, with no composure and no self-control, — and the possibility of its going to the good or the bad about equal, — well, it's what I call the very deuce of a mouth."

"There, is that better?"

"It's better," Guenn answered, turning away indifferently, "but it's ugly."

"It *is* ugly," Hamor said, laughing and looking at her with admiration, this time not of her beauty. It was not every brother artist who would give him an unbiassed opinion, still less every casual visitor. Honesty was a rare guest, whom he knew how to prize. He tried a small experiment. He delighted in experiments. "Will you go over and turn all those pictures face out, and tell me what you think of them?"

She walked straight across to the other side of the garret, where six or eight pictures in various stages of completion stood face to the wall. In a moment the whole row was on exhibition; and Guenn standing at a little distance,* head erect, hands busily knitting, expressed her incisive opinions as special art-critic, with the self-confidence which she would have displayed, had the subjects under discussion been fish.

"Well, — why not?" reflected Hamor. "Who waits for special training before he criticises anything and everything, in the heavens above, the earth beneath, and the waters under the earth? What do I know about music, for instance, and when have I refrained — given the shadow of an opportunity — from a voluble exposition of my utterly worthless views about Wagner? The girl is delicious. Thank heaven, she does n't look like an owl, and try to think of something impressive to say, as most of them do." "Them," in this ungal-lant comparison, referring to the many fair ladies who had delighted to honor Mr. Hamor with their presence in his studio, their sympathy and approval.

Guenn's eyes were keen, her tongue was honest, her spirit unintimidated. "If all art-critics were endowed, by a merciful providence, with these excellent gifts!" groaned the young painter. She did not hesitate an instant, but flung at each canvas in turn her rapid judgment, based upon an original, but by no means a valueless, system. Some of Douglas's and Staunton's sketches were among the number.

"Well, there's an uncomfortable lot," exclaimed Guenn, "crowded together, no room to breathe, and the walls going to fall on their heads."

"A palpable hit for Douglas," was Hamor's mental comment. "I told you so, my dear fellow, but you

would n't believe me." He watched her with infinite delight.

"Michel had better hurry! Oh, he must reef fast!" she called excitedly. "Is it Jacques at the tiller? Yes, it's Jacques. It's a pity they have nobody else to help. Where's the mousse? Ah, it's an ugly squall, and going to strike hard!"

The picture was in Staunton's most vigorous style. Hamor got up and walked over to her. "I actually believe she has art feeling," he thought, looking at her closely with an expression of positive respect on his face.

Sketches by Hamor of people she knew seemed not to impress her especially. She passed them by, with indifferent comments. "Right again. They don't amount to much," his conscience admitted. Then came a large picture nearly completed, a happy combination of the oft-recurring Jeanne and Victoria, this time on a pile of planks down by the gray house, with the faded green blinds, and the tall lilac-bushes. The girls sat eagerly gossiping in shadow, their heads near together, their knitting neglected, a cat playing with a fallen ball of yarn. The hazy autumn sunshine streamed warmly on the lilac leaves and flickered through them upon the planks and on the back of Victoria's coiffe and a bit of her fresh cheek and throat and down her raiment of many colors. Hamor considered it the best work he had done in Plouvenec. He smiled to find himself awaiting the young girl's verdict with interest.

"It's good and warm down there," Guenn remarked, casting a glance of unfavorable comparison round the damp and chilly garret. "If they mean to keep out of the sun, they'll have to move over soon." Then,

bursting into a laugh, "Victoria is such a fool," she explained candidly. "Now does n't she look like a fool with her long stupid nose, and her eyes like gooseberries?"

Hamor privately agreed with her. Suddenly she turned suspiciously towards Jeanne. "Jeanne, tell me this instant, what you were talking about," she exclaimed dictatorially, a flash of jealous temper in her eyes. "I've told you often enough, Victoria is a sly cat, and not to be trusted round the corner. I should n't think you'd be so bête as to sit there and tell her all you know. When she looks like that, she means to be hateful—every time! Tell me, Jeanne, what were you saying? I don't care an old sabot for what she said. It was all a pack of lies. But you, Jeanne!" She stamped her foot, and waited with a lordly air for her friend's appeasing answer.

"But it was nothing, Guenn," Jeanne said mildly. "It was only posing, you know. I never spoke two words to her the whole time. Monsieur will tell you so. Monsieur did it."

Guenn looked inquiringly at them both. She saw that she had displayed too much zeal. She deigned to be convinced, smiled brilliantly with an abrupt change of the subject. "I know that cat!" she said amiably.

How long it seemed since that same cat had coldly turned his back upon her, and how much pleasanter it was up here than worrying down in the dismal archway. Having accepted the atelier, she accepted it without condition or reserve. She forgot her fears and her pride; she forgot that she was gratifying her father; she forgot Thymert.

"Ah, mon dieu, que la vie est amère!"

she began to hum in her volatile fashion. Jeanne

sang too with a pleasant little voice. Hamor was turning his picture face to the wall again, with a profoundly satisfied air, when he heard an exclamation from Guenn. She had spied some foils, masks, and gloves, and was regarding them with evident excitement. For once her curiosity conquered her pride. "Do you wear those things when you go to war?" she asked eagerly.

Hamor wickedly said: "Yes." He felt a boyish delight in the situation, and acknowledged himself too weak to resist the chance of making a favorable impression upon her martial spirit.

"Do all the men in your country wear such big gloves when they go to war?"

"Yes," said the traitor again.

Having satisfied her curiosity, Guenn recovered her pride. "We don't," she said grandly. "We don't wear any gloves when we fight. And our swords are larger. The locksmith's sword is much larger, much."

"The locksmith?"

"Yes. Don't you know him?" with commiseration for Monsieur Hamor's vain and unprofitable days, if denied this boon.

"I know him as a locksmith, not as a soldier," he suggested in humble apology.

"Well," began Guenn rapidly, "he was at the battle of Solferino. That," she exclaimed with a vague and superb gesture, "was in one of the wars which we Bretons have fought against the heathen."

"Ah!" remarked Hamor soberly, as if grateful for the information.

"And his captain said to him, 'Victor!' The locksmith's name was Victor. It was an honor that the captain called him by his petit nom. 'Victor, come here!' said the captain.

"'Oui, mon capitaine,' said Victor." Guenn straightened herself and saluted.

"'Drink from my flask, brother.' It was an honor that he said 'brother,' and gave Victor his own flask," she explained, with beautiful flashing eyes.

"'Oui, mon capitaine,' and Victor drank.

"'Embrace me, brother.'

"'Oui, mon capitaine,' and Victor embraced him.

"'Take twelve men, and cut me a hole — there — through the thickest of them.'

"'Oui, mon capitaine.'" With each response Guenn saluted. Now she threw out her left foot and wheeled, ready to march off.

"'You know it means death, brother,' said the captain.

"'Oui, mon capitaine,' said Victor.

"And he went, with his twelve, and he cut the hole; and every one of the twelve was killed," — she moved and swayed, thrilled with strong feeling; "but the blessed Virgin brought Victor back, only there is not an inch on his brave breast" — she clutched sympathetically at her kerchief — "not scarred and seamed and ploughed by bullets and sabres!"

Hamor looked from the girl's impassioned face to his corpulent fencing-gloves, and felt honestly ashamed of himself.

Steps on the stairway and a knock at the door ushered in Staunton and Douglas. Guenn, still absorbed in her tale of battle, stared at them in a belligerent fashion, as if she would fain demand how they dared to intrude upon her realm. Staunton was drolly reminded of his boyhood and his *Télémaque*. "*Comment avez-vous pu être assez téméraire pour aborder dans mon île?*" he murmured smilingly. "Is n't that the way it used to go?"

"What?" said Douglas innocently.

"Oh, nothing of any importance; only an old joke."

"Is it lunch time?" asked Hamor.

"Quite," Staunton replied with a comprehensive smile.

"Well then, wait, will you? I am not going to work in the atelier this afternoon," he said, turning to Jeanne, and including Nannic and Guenn in his glance. "Will you come to-morrow as usual?"

"Yes," said Jeanne dutifully.

"Nannic, of course, will come and go when he likes."

"Of course," echoed the gargoyles.

"And you, Guenn?"

"Perhaps," she answered brusquely.

"You don't find it unpleasant up here?" He bent over her, standing very near. His voice was low and caressing.

"It's well enough," she returned with a shrug, but over the whole sensitive face trembled a warm, rich color. Then she glanced with quick suspicion at the two young men. Staunton harmlessly turned away and looked out of the window. Douglas as harmlessly stared at her, like a schoolboy.

"I may expect you then?" Hamor said gently.

"Who knows?" she answered with her old indifference.

But Hamor knew that she would come. Her eloquent eyes gave the promise which her lips sought to withhold.

The three clattered cheerfully down the stairway. Staunton looked inquiringly at his friend. Hamor sat down and broke into immoderate laughter.

"Well," said Douglas, "what's the joke? Have you gone mad?"

"On the contrary, I never in my life felt more suc-

cessfully rational. But that girl, — she's been here two hours. She simply marched in and took possession. There is n't a canvas, or a brush, or a rag that I can call my own. She occupies this garret. She is magnificent. Really I must laugh. I must let myself out a little. I shall give myself the whole afternoon to recuperate. It is incredible," and he raised his eyes towards the rafters in amused wonder.

"Well," said Douglas doubtfully, "I hope Mademoiselle Rodellec will allow us to come in, now and then."

"She is the most beautiful girl I ever saw." Hamor had grown thoughtful — "the — most — beautiful" — he repeated solemnly.

"We have heard all that before, and we do not doubt it," Staunton remarked, looking at him with a curious smile. "She is the most beautiful girl you ever saw, and you are going to make a great picture of her, and get the medal of honor, and fame and fortune."

"I am," asserted Hamor with absolute conviction.

"In the mean time," Staunton added dryly, "let us go to lunch."





CHAPTER XIII.

MIZ DU, "the black month," as the Bretons call November, was a profitable time for our painters. If the working-days grew shorter and the whist-evenings longer, the whole landscape had toned down from summer brilliancy into the softness which is the painter's joy and despair; and over fields of waving flax, meadows tufted with broom and gorse, and apple-trees mantled in mistletoe, — along every holly-grown mossy wall, — through the shadowy arches of the superb woods, the deep-retreating *chemin creux* and the long reaches towards the bay, lay an unspeakable glamour of atmosphere and warmth of tone revealed, not lavishly, but in beautiful touches here and there, with the reserve of late autumn.

The young men worked chiefly out of doors, making the most of the long series of fair days. Hamor, never in better health and spirits, conscious of growing power, buoyed by his indomitable hope and ambition, felt as

free from care as a boy. Followed by one or all of his suite, he made the most charming studies and sketches, chiefly of Guenn in every possible attitude and situation.

Meanwhile if he was studying Guenn, Guenn was studying him. Not an expression, a gesture, a tone of Hamor's passed unobserved. During the long hours in which she silently posed, and he was occupied with a curve, a shadow, a subtle youthful color, she in return concentrated all the force of her intense nature upon her speculations in regard to him. While he painted her on his canvas, she engraved him upon her heart. He had indeed haunted her fancy from the first, but the day she entered the studio, a new era began, and all the passionate eagerness with which she had sought to avoid and resist him was now employed in anticipating his every wish. He was no longer like some dominant object in the landscape impossible to overlook or ignore, do what one would; but, like the sunshine Guenn loved, he had become a part of her daily existence. It seemed to her that she had never lived before. She remembered with commiseration the old Guenn who never knew what it was to rise in the morning under the charm of a beautiful yesterday, under the charm of an alluring to-day, — kind looks lingering in her memory, kind tones sounding in her ears and thrilling her heart. She was radiantly happy. To sit hour after hour before him, to be of use to him, to receive the full approval of his animated face, to follow every motion of his hand, to obey his faintest suggestion, to wander about the beautiful country and listen to his voice, for Hamor in some moods grew extremely loquacious and enjoyed assuming a pleasantly didactic tone with his following, — all this was her joy

and her life. She performed her other duties in a restless feverish way, eager to return to him.

By the river, much to Jeanne's distress, Guenn was apt to be abstracted and suffered many great rhetorical opportunities to pass by unobserved. But once when the busy chroniclers of Plouvenec events were making disparaging allusions to Monsieur Hamor, not in the least because they disliked him, but because it seemed to be, according to their ideas of the fitness of things, his turn to serve as target, Guenn roused from her listless soaping and pounding, colored brilliantly, sprang to her feet in the old way, and treated them right and left, innocent and guilty, to her indignant defence of Hamor, finishing by a stormy attack of the whole washing sisterhood. Mother Nives chuckled and sneered and always knew it would end in this way, but the sudden blazing up of Guenn Rodellec's temper was such an every-day matter, that even the Nives did not suspect the truth. Guenn rampant they all understood. Guenn, meek and passive, would naturally arouse curiosity. Little Jeanne, who in these latter days often felt puzzled and uncomfortable, glowed with delight to see her assert herself with the old stormy spirit.

Meek she certainly was not. Cycles of spiritual discipline would have been essential to instil meekness in that hot and wayward heart. But she was so painfully eager to please Hamor, and her devotion to him was so boundless, that she instinctively assumed at times an outward quiet, and her quick brain was continually receiving new impressions of that far-off world and that different life which had produced this wondrous being so unlike the men she had known. She was fond of her old friends, but just now she seemed to have no time for them. She grew less bold in her retorts, and evenings,

on the common and along the quay, found no amusement in paying the sailors in their own coin, whether they were sportive with rough jokes or friendly pushes. Their coarse voices seemed strange to her. She had accustomed herself to a finely modulated tone. Their ways began to jar upon her. She had grown used to something different. Monsieur Hamor did not swear in her presence. Monsieur Hamor was never violent. Monsieur Hamor had fine white linen handkerchiefs and narrow polished nails. She would fasten her eyes upon his firm well-shaped hands and follow their movements with indescribable fascination. Sometimes he gently turned her head to the right or left, up or down, moved her shoulders. What wonder, after that, that she resented the grimy touch of Loïc or even of honest Alain? Once indeed she spoke irritably to Alain, who did not deserve it, if his breath did smell of grog instead of cigarettes and if his Jersey was not a painter's brown velveteen coat. The tears started to her eyes, and she ran quickly after him to tell him she was sorry, which made him happy for many a day. But he would have been less content had he known that she was waiting there alone in the shadow only to see once more before she slept the face she had seen all day long. She knew where the light would strike it when he came out of the door of the Grand, the beautiful face shining always before her now. Guenn trembled and flushed with joy as it finally passed by in the night. Her heart was so full of worship for this man, she longed to lie at his feet and die of the rapture of having his glance rest kindly upon her. She forgot to sing with the other girls. She was always waiting for the music of his voice.

Meanwhile Hamor was in a high state of satisfaction. He told his friends that Guenn was the most perfectly

sympathetic model he had ever had. "Her intelligence is remarkable," he would say; "she obeys the quiver of an eyelash. When I think there was once a possibility that I could n't have her, — well, it fills me even now with rage. I'm making studies of her, to use for all the rest of my life. I never expect to find such a beauty again."

"She'll be as prominent in your pictures as Andrea del Sarto's wife in his," suggested Staunton quietly.

"Well, yes, only in my case it's pure utility and no infatuation. Mrs. Andrea del Sarto and all her tribe would have wasted their sweetness on me."

"Unquestionably," said Staunton, at which Hamor looked at him and laughed.

Being, as we have seen, an amiably disposed man, Hamor, aside from Guenn's art-importance to him, "really liked the little thing." There was much which amused him in his intercourse with these Breton children, and it seemed to him that, without unpleasantly accentuating the rôle of pedagogue, his sojourn in Plouvenec might be in many respects useful to them. Various things which Guenn did the first day she did not do the third. He remarked that she was singularly impressionable, had in fact a sixth sense in matters of her own improvement, and never needed to be told anything twice. If he raised his eyebrows significantly, when she freely touched his books with her little brown hands, he noticed, with approval of his system, that she never did it again. She had her moments of insubordination, of temper, of haughtiness even with him, but he knew how to subdue her, and his gentle voice soon brought her not only to terms but to keen repentance, while Nannic looked wisely from one to the other, and Jeanne waited patiently until the storm was past. Ha-

mor had his crystallized theories, and was curiously proud of his influence; but, clever as he thought himself, his philosophy failed to grasp the situation.

A little episode in the atelier might have enlightened him, had he taken the trouble to interpret it. A friend from Paris came to Plouvenec for a couple of days. Hamor placed his studio, models, and all his belongings at the stranger's service. It pleased him—as it had pleased many before him—to make a study of Jeanne knitting in a dormer window, with a delicious tracery of cobwebs above her charming head, and a gleam of golden lichens on the roof, seen through the broken panes. Sensible little Jeanne seated herself with her matter-of-fact air. She was as familiar with that particular pose as she was with her dinner. It seemed to her that she was born to knit on that stone window-seat, with a strange young man *planté là*,—his easel, busy hand, and intent face always before her. Sometimes the eyes were brown, sometimes blue; sometimes the nose was long, sometimes short; sometimes the mustaches curled up, sometimes down,—still it was the old story. “He is the eleventh,” reflected Jeanne, suppressing a yawn; “the tenth had no mustache. It is better than packing fish,”—philosophically—“and yet I am a little tired of the window, and also of the boxes; I have sat sixteen times on the boxes, par exemple!”

The stranger worked rapidly. Hamor, at his end of the room, was equally absorbed in his own affairs. Every one was very silent. Now and then, Nannic breathed rather loud, then chuckled as if occupied with irresistibly pleasing thoughts. No one noticed him. Guenn, in a difficult pose with a water-jug, stood unwearingly hour after hour, her luminous eyes devouring Hamor's face. At length the guest said:—

"Will you come here a moment, Hamor?"

Hamor said, "Rest, Guenn," and walked across the room.

"What's the trouble?" asked the stranger.

Hamor looked sharply from the model to the picture.

"Chin," he answered abruptly.

"Ah, yes;" after a moment, "Is that better?"

"I think so. Your color in the dark corner there is delicious. You always did that sort of thing well," Hamor said heartily. "But is n't the dress rather *chic*?"

"Well, I don't know," his friend said, smiling, without offering to make it rougher, dirtier, and truer. He admired Hamor, but he also had his own ideas.

Jeanne was very pretty to-day, in her faded, rusty greens, — smiling over her knitting with a sweet, contented air. Hamor went over to her, took her head in both his hands, posed it as he wished, talking rapidly, and looking over his shoulder at his friend, his face brilliant with a sudden enthusiasm: "You have made her too old; we always make their faces too old. The youth in them is too subtle to reproduce. Look at the tenderness of modelling in this child's cheek and throat; was there ever anything like that?"

He smiled with delight, then shook his head with a little sigh over the elusive character of this dawning beauty, and turned to meet Guenn's eyes fixed upon him with a piteous, hungry look in them. He had spoken English; she had not understood a word. She was not angry with Jeanne, but it seemed to her something was clutching her heart. "What, what! is the little thing jealous of her friend's prettiness?" he thought carelessly: "heaven knows she has no occasion." Whistling softly, he resumed his work, — the

moment passed ; if Guenn remembered it, it was only to look wistfully at Jeanne, and wonder what it was monsieur had said as he smiled and touched her cheeks.

Again, in the little churchyard at Beûzec, he saw the same look in her eyes. It was a place Hamor liked. His imagination was always active when he sat in that ancient graveyard before the tall, quaint, stone crucifix, the steps crumbling away, worn hollow by kneeling penitents for centuries. The graveyard where children played, and paths led familiarly in every direction for the convenience of the villagers, who used it to shorten distances, both touched and amused him. He thought the church in its queer enclosure, with the houses crowding cheerfully about its high wall, a unique gem. There were lovely grays in its old granite ; its lozenge panes delighted him ; its grotesquely carved faces were as amusing as Nannic's own. Its rude sculpture, specimens of curious old Breton art, probably all done by zealous souls in the little hamlet, were not without charm. He liked leisurely to decipher nearly illegible inscriptions and strange Breton names.

Hamor was one of that species of amiable man capable of remarking, in the solemn moment of parting for years from a woman who loved him, and whom he was supposed to love : " Your friend is the very most charming woman I ever saw," — and this with the kindest, warmest smile directed dreamily to his love's absent friend. So pronounced a tendency to irrelevance — not to use a harsher word — could not be pleasing or comprehensible to any woman, however liberal and unexacting she might be. When one is obliged to send one's love-messages through a telephone, it is scarcely as agreeable as the consciousness of close proximity. Hamor often placed himself under

telephonic conditions. It was something of the kind that wounded Guenn at Beûzec.

Hamor had wanted a walk, and strolled over to the old church. He allowed Jeanne and Guenn to come, in case he should happen to need them. Nannic never said whether he were coming or not, but liked to appear mysteriously; and in all his whims and idiosyncrasies Hamor indulged him fully.

Guenn was in high spirits, rosy, the incarnation of mischief. She had begun to grasp the idea that there might be still a few things for her to learn under a roof, but surely in the open air one could do as one pleased. Here was no private property one should not finger, no doors one should not slam, no brother artists or lady visitors at whom one should not scowl or sulk or turn one's back or stare rudely. In the small society of to-day there was no one whom she wished to call a fool. Monsieur seemed to object to her free use of this word. Why, Guenn could not imagine. Surely, if one was a fool, it was best to say so outright. This method saved time; and indeed there were so many fools. However, if it pleased monsieur when she bit her tongue in two, rather than say what was perfectly evident, she was only too glad to make the sacrifice for his sake. Nannic was never a fool: he was wiser than all the world. Jeanne was good and sensible, — nice little Jeanne; Guenn rarely called her a fool unless in a very bad temper; and indeed it was seldom that she was cross with her. As to hands, feet, knees, and elbows, there were mysterious hints which Guenn's mind had imbibed, but, as yet, imperfectly digested. To-day she was glad to leave it all. To-day she was unconsciously relieved to drop this vast burden of newly acquired knowledge behind her in the atelier. Rejoicing, she

looked up to the tree-tops and the sky and drew long breaths of the cool autumn air, and in her old freedom jumped such ditches and walls as seemed to have been placed there by benevolent powers for purely jumping purposes. She was irresistibly charming, Hamor thought; and, as for her boyish ways, he knew many nice girls at home who would enjoy doing all that she did, — who would do it, too, if the surroundings were propitious, — older girls than Guenn, and she was only sixteen or seventeen. All healthy girls must like such things. There was that nice little Danish artist working at Nevin: how well she did it! As for Guenn, there were no preliminaries or pauses in her method: she jumped the low walls with one bound; swung herself over the higher ones with a swift hand-spring, like a man; and the grace and buoyancy of her movements were a constant delight and wonder to Hamor. She drank in his approval with happy excitement. She was living intensely in the moment: for her there was no past, no future.

Reaching the churchyard, Hamor seated himself on the ivy-grown wall and silently sketched the simple, noble proportions and the tender tones of granite, moss, and ivy of the little church. "If I don't do something with this," he said reflectively, communing, as was often his habit, chiefly with himself, yet graciously permitting his satellites to catch his meaning, "I may be sorry when I'm gone for good. I never saw anything else in quite this character: the whole expression of it is unique in its vigorous Breton simplicity and local color. I must make something of the chance before I go," he muttered. "Shall I leave it still and empty, with its own cachet? Shall I fill it with peasants, — say Guenn as bride, and a brilliant, noisy train?"

He turned to consider her acting in this capacity, — blushing, shy, yet saucy, surrounded by a troop of brightly dressed maidens. He saw the whole cortège, — the young men with peacocks' feathers in their hats; rich old Breton embroideries, in silver and blue and scarlet; the gleam of the coiffes; the musicians with bagpipes. But where was the bonny bride? Here was only a girl pale as death staring strangely at him, — shivering as if from cold. He passed his hand over his eyes, then frowned slightly: she had destroyed the charming vision. She had disturbed him.

"What's the matter, Guenn?" he said coldly.

"Are you going, monsieur?" she stammered.

"Going?" he had forgotten his own words. "No — not yet — perhaps not for an hour."

"I mean — are you going away — from Plouvenec?"

He stared at her. For some imperceptible reason she irritated him. Why should she be turning this white imploring face up to his? He wanted to compose pictures. "Why yes — of course — some time," he answered indifferently.

"When?" persisted the girl.

"When I have done all the work I wish to do here. I suppose — when I've absorbed whatever this place can offer me," he replied carelessly. "Then I shall study elsewhere."

Guenn turned, and walked abruptly into the church-porch out of his sight.

"What possesses the girl?" reflected Hamor on the wall. "No doubt she is disappointed, but why should she be tragic? She's fond of me, I admit. Why not? It's perfectly natural. I have influence over her. I am good to her, and she has seen very few decent men. As for taking it seriously, as Staunton would have me, I can't

and won't. All women and children like me — why should n't Guenn? It's only a passing girlish fancy, and she'll get over it and marry Alain. But one thing is certain: she will lose her spirit — her greatest charm — if she grows sentimental. She has n't the features for tragedy. I must keep her jolly. It's disturbing when she sulks. What more can I do? I could n't fall in love with the child, to save my soul; and nothing would induce me to have any sort of a flirtation with her: The main thing now is to get on as fast as possible with the boat-picture. What are those little rascals doing?" He looked with a smile towards the opposite wall near which Nannic and Jeanne were sitting comfortably on the corner grave, eating dry coarse bread.

"Children," he called. He was often very paternal in his manner to the three. "Come across the way. I'll see if I can find some cider for you."

They entered the nearest small, dark stone house. There were two rooms on the ground floor, and ladders leading up to sleeping places in the roof. Hamor noticed the usual lit clos looming up behind the bench and table, the usual splendid old oak and fairly good carving, the stone floor and enormous fireplace. The two women there spoke no French, but Hamor always managed well with signs and smiles; then to-day the little Bretons could interpret for him. They drank their cider and were merry. Guenn remained alone, hidden in a corner of the old porch.

The younger woman had a lovely boy, eighteen months old, on her knee. Attracted by the child's beauty, Hamor bent over him with his gentlest smile, anticipating the success he usually met with, in taming young animals. But the sturdy Breton infant screwed his fists into his eyes, turned his back, opened his mouth

to its widest possibilities, and emitted a prolonged howl of mingled rage and fear. Hamor's face fell. He was curiously disconcerted. The women apologized, but nothing but Hamor's departure would pacify the irate baby. Hamor left the house crestfallen. "Curious how so small a thing can disturb a man," he mused. His discomfiture abode with him, and indeed he said openly to the children, — "I can't say how sorry I am to have frightened that pretty boy. I am soft-hearted towards such tiny things. I hate to give them pain." More than once on the way home, he deigned to express his regret at this occurrence, and it was perfectly evident to Jeanne and Nannic that the baby's repulse was rather a serious matter to Monsieur Hamor.

Returning to the graveyard in a somewhat softened mood, he occupied himself with a very small and obscure grave, neglected and covered with brambles, — "Yves Hernadan — two years old." Every line of his face expressed sympathy with the dead boy, — delight in his speculations about this far-removed, unknown being. Guenn had stolen out from her refuge, her heart tender and full of self-reproach. Apart from the others, she watched Hamor as he bent over the grave. "A little ash, — a little oak, — a little nettle," he murmured, smiling lovingly into the far-off past, separating with his fine hands the rough growth on Yves Hernadan's grave. "Poor little soul! Rest in peace. If you are not at rest after four hundred years, you'll never be." Guenn stole near and listened. Why did he care about Yves Hernadan? Why did he smile in that far-off way? Why would he not give her one kind look? Was it her fault that her heart ached?

"A little ash, a little oak," repeated Hamor, — "a little —" Guenn could not bear it. The abstracted

smile on his face, the voluntary concentration of his thoughts upon an utterly unknown being, dead four centuries, maddened her. She flung up her arms with a cry of rage.

"I hate that Yves Hernadan!" she exclaimed passionately, then like an arrow sprang over the wall, and they saw her cross the field on a dead run.

"Upon my word!" said Hamor, standing up and watching her; then looked pleasantly from Nannic to Jeanne with a shrug as if he would say: "I wash my hands in innocence." Suddenly, his face changed. "It would n't after all be possible for her to desert me altogether?" Guenn was out of sight. Already he missed her vivid beauty. It occurred to him that he had perhaps felt too secure of this creature of most uncertain mood. "If only she'll stay with me, until I paint her in the old ferry-boat, she may devote the rest of her life to the exercise of her angry passions. At all events, the sooner I go to work in earnest with her the better."

"She'll come again, — again, — again," chanted Nannic solemnly, his crooked, crossed arms resting on a low tombstone.

"I believe you, Solomon," Hamor said, laughing. Jeanne was well pleased. This was as it should be. Guenn watching monsieur with great wretched eyes was not to her taste. It destroyed her traditions. Guenn in a fine fury flying over the churchyard wall was a perfectly simple and natural episode, and Jeanne felt greatly relieved. Obedience and gentleness too long continued on the part of Guenn Rodellec, filled her friend with vague anxiety. So unnatural a condition of things must be dangerous, she reasoned.

Guenn did indeed come again. After the manner of womankind she reproached herself for the blow mon-

sieur had given her, and was eager for another one. She tremblingly haunted the shadows of the common that night, and saw her hero pass twice. She clasped her hands and held her breath as he came near; but he did not see her or think of her indeed. He was chatting amiably, explaining some American institutions to the chief of the police, who was listening with interest, as one always listened to ce gentil Monsieur Hamor. Guenn heard his voice, and the odor of his cigarette reached in the darkness before she could see him. She breathed it in with a kind of painful ecstasy. She loved even the cloud of cigarette smoke that revealed the presence of her divinity. And the time was coming when he would be gone? when she would not be posing for him all day long in the atelier, — in the woods or on the meadow? when the others would sit at the tables with their little glasses and not he? when she could not see his face or hear his voice, because he would be *gone*? No! It was impossible. She could not grasp the thought. Something would happen. With this she began to take comfort. Yes, surely something would happen. All her courage and hope rose to convince her that something must, indeed, happen before such misery should blast her life.

She was punctual at the studio the next morning. Hamor thought she looked pale. "I must take care that she does not lose her color," he thought with some anxiety. "Pacification is the word — without, of course, lessening my influence." Hamor had profound respect for what he called his influence. He sent Jeanne and Nannie on an ingeniously devised errand with ramifications.

"Guenn," he said, "I want to talk seriously with you."

She looked as if she should enjoy nothing better than having him talk seriously with her. If he would only look at her and realize her existence, she could be happy. If he would not lose himself in musings over graves and unendurable dead children. She raised her lovely eyes to his gravely, and waited for him to begin. She had fallen in one of her pretty careless attitudes on the window-seat. Hamor resisted his inclination to sketch her.

He was not fortunate in the selection of his first theme. Tact may forsake the wisest of us in critical moments. It seemed as if the spirit of one of Hamor's parson ancestors of a remote and rigid period had taken possession of the young man. He began a homily upon the vice of yielding to a hot temper and the virtue of self-control, fairly wrestled with Guenn's delinquencies as it was the pristine habit of his race to wrestle with the unregenerate and the backslider. Then he endeavored to picture to her the perfections of the ideal girl who never swings herself over a wall in a rage.

The ideal girl did not appear to make much impression upon Guenn. Indeed she began to look rosy and happy again. Under this personal attention, she revived, and listened contentedly to Hamor's voice running on in uninterrupted eloquence.

Presently he paused with some impatience. "Am I a fool or a hypocrite—or both?" he asked himself candidly. "What do I care for the girl's temper or manners? I only care for my picture." He walked across the studio once or twice, returned to the dormer-window with a completely changed expression. The parson had disappeared. Here was only the painter.

"Guenn," he said eagerly, "never mind yesterday. I won't preach any more. Jump over all the walls in

Plouvenec at the risk of your life and fly into a passion every day if you like, but help me where I need you. Help me, Guenn."

She started up electrified. His tone thrilled her through and through.

"You can help me and no one else. See, I talk plainly with you because you are sensible. I told you long ago, in the boat that day, that I care for my art and only for my art. It is the truth. There is nothing, nobody, that I would not sacrifice to that. You cannot comprehend it. I don't expect you to. But perhaps you can understand me when I tell you it is a matter of life and death to me to paint the picture I have in my mind — my great picture — you —"

Guenn stood near him, breathing fast, her impassioned eyes fixed upon his. She could help him, she! Not be used simply as a tool, like his brush or his canvas, but help him intelligently. He was appealing to her to do it!

"If you sulk and make scenes and grow pale," he continued, "you won't help me. I hate scenes. Women always make scenes when a man is overworked and nervous. You made a scene yesterday and interrupted my train of thought. Don't do it again." Guenn was dumb with shame and remorse. "Of course, I am going away some time. Could you expect me to stay in this place forever? But I'm not going yet, — not for a long time." The girl's face grew radiant with delight. "And why not help me, then, while I stay. Why not be my friend, and do all you can for me and what I love best? Why not be large-hearted and generous? Why not stand shoulder to shoulder with me in my best work? And after I am gone — can I indeed control my going? — why not be able to say, I helped

him — I was his friend? See, Guenn, when you sulk and grow pale and jealous and haggard, you are of no use to me. It is your beauty I need, not your small moods that may destroy it. Good heavens, child! can't you understand what a picture is to a man? Can't you lend yourself to a large thought? Well, then, consider, and try to rise above whatever is mean and petty in you. I could not speak more honestly, could I?"

He could not, indeed; but he need not have spoken with that rich, eloquent voice; he need not have looked in her eyes as a lover looks.

"You are beautiful, Guenn: be beautiful for me," pleaded the tender, persuasive tones.

Ah, the rapture of that moment! To hear her beauty praised by this man who was a god to her! The beauty she had worn so carelessly was precious in his eyes. She could help him, only she. She drew herself up superbly. Was Victor so proud as this when his captain in the great battle with the heathen said: "Drink from my flask, brother"? Hamor might have studied weeks and not found what accident and his supreme selfishness had suddenly suggested to him, — the way to win, not Guenn's heart, for that indeed he had always had; but her highest effort for him at any cost. Her soul was quivering under his skilful touch; the strongest chords of her nature were responding to his appeal, — her love, her loyalty, her ambition, and that peculiar sense of isolation, of being unlike the others, which she, the cleverest, merriest, most daring girl in the village, had borne through all her work and play, her laughter, songs, and unconscionable despotism.

Hamor was gratified by the evident success of his influence. He held out his hand with a charmingly in-

dulgent smile. "Well, it is settled? Will you help me, then?"

How beautiful the child was! What was it in this girl that illumined her face so marvellously? Now as she stood, there was something heroic yet tender in her whole being. It was merely a question of posing, but one would say only high thoughts were animating her ardent spirit.

She lifted her hand and laid it in his. "Whatever comes," she said solemnly.

Hamor looked down with faint amusement at the small brown thing lying on his palm. Guenn's eyes were wet and beautiful; her face looking up to his was full of the touching loveliness of extreme youth, and of the exaltation of a noble love. She was trembling a little, he noticed. Suddenly she stooped and laid her cheek on his hand. It was the lightest, shyest touch, as if some little wild thing of the woods had offered him a furtive caress. Hamor, as he often virtuously told himself, was not the kind of man to indulge in any species of "affair" with his models: he had no interest in that sort of thing, and then, as an honest man, he liked these untutored children to feel that they could trust him. But in spite of his exemplary theories, in spite of the cumulative influence of his whole august ancestral row of Puritan divines, the soft touch of the girl's innocent cheek in its pure homage and sweet surrender moved him strangely; and before the pretty little coiffed head, with the curly brown hair clustering in rings at the back of the slender neck, was lifted, he had flung his left arm warmly across her shoulders.

Guenn did not belong to the commonplace melting type of womankind: at a touch she did not yield. Every honest fisher-girl in Plouvenec knew from expe-

rience what to do when any one, high or low, permitted himself a familiarity. If it had been Alain, she would have repaid him with a well-aimed blow. This was Plouvenec etiquette. But it was not Alain: it was monsieur; and if monsieur had said, "Guenn, I am going to cut you in tiny pieces to help my great picture," she would have been proud and glad as she was now. Still not in vain was she Guenn Rodellec. Like a flash she slipped from his grasp when he had scarcely touched her, and with one of her free bounds stood facing him at a safe distance, radiantly happy, laughing, glowing, looking at him without the slightest embarrassment, but with exquisite maidenliness.

Hamor lighted a cigarette with palpable unconcern, and formulated several new theories.

"Monsieur," said Guenn, with an indescribable combination of sweetness and mirth in her voice, "I don't hate that four-hundred-year-old baby to-day."

"Well, I'm glad to hear that. It was inhuman of you."

"Dead is dead," said the girl, with a snap of her fingers: "we are alive."

"You are, at least: nobody can deny that."

She laughed brightly. All her old playfulness had returned. She was the new Guenn, the old Guenn, the same Guenn, a different Guenn, many Guenns in one; but fresh, fearless, bewitching, as best became her. Hamor congratulated himself heartily upon the re-transformation.

"When shall we begin?" she asked confidently.

"Ah, there are some difficulties: I must consult with you."

"Well?" she inquired, folding her arms with a business-like air.

"I want you in the scow at the ferry-way, as you were that day. I can do my background well enough from a boat, but I suppose you could n't pose there?"

"No: I could n't, positively: at least I could; but the passeur would always be wanting his boat; and then" — with her delicious laugh — "I should be always hopping up to chase the boys away and punch their heads."

"We might hire somebody to punch the boys' heads," he suggested gravely.

"We might," dubiously, "but I run faster than any one else."

"True, Guenn; but you do everything better than any one else. You pose best, you know; and obviously you can't pose and chastise boys at the same moment and do full justice to them and me. I feared the spot might be too much of a public thoroughfare. You are sure the boys would flock there?"

"Millions!" exclaimed Guenn, with an expansive sweep of both arms.

"Then what shall we do?"

Guenn, thinking earnestly, her hands on her hips, her head on one side, paced the atelier with her free step.

"I was mad to think of taming the girl," reflected Hamor, watching her closely: "she has grown beautiful this very morning. She requires her freedom. I am on the right track now."

"Monsieur," she said, stopping abruptly and facing him, "you see wherever I go they will come."

"Naturally."

"If they hear Guenn Rodellec is posing anywhere on the shore, the whole village will rush pell-mell to see."

"Of course."

"Jeanne could do it: I can not," she remarked with the simplicity of true greatness.

"Precisely."

"I'll tell you what, monsieur; you just make your walls and your slimy stone steps, and when you want me we will go to the Lannions."

"Guenn, you clever girl, you genius!"

"The good curé will help us," she added cheerfully.

"You have made the best possible suggestion," he said with enthusiasm. "The Lannions by all means, and then I can get him too: Guenn, you ought to be prime minister."

She had no idea what that might be, but she knew it was something pleasant, for monsieur was looking at her with a strongly approving smile.

When Jeanne and Nannic's voices sounded again on the stairway, Guenn was singing —

"Ah, mon dieu, que la vie est amè-re,"

in the merriest way in the world, — a sure sign to the initiated that she was in unclouded spirits; while Hamor, silent and preoccupied, was tacking paper on a frame for a large study.

Nannic threw a sly glance at each, then gravely occupied his boxes. Presently, in a low and mysterious tone, he began a monotonous chant in Breton. The two girls looked at each other and laughed, first softly, then with unrestrained heartiness. Hamor turned inquiringly.

"He is making a famous Breton chant," Guenn explained with mingled pride and amusement. "He can make very good ones. It is a pity monsieur cannot understand the words: Nannic is so droll."

The boy, unmoved by the comments of his audi-

ence, sang on as if for his own exclusive edification. His eyes were raised and fixed upon a point in a distant beam; not a muscle of his face betrayed the faintest consciousness of his surroundings.

"But what is the little rascal saying?" demanded Hamor.

"He began like this, only it does n't sound the same in French, you know." Guenn and Jeanne laughed, looked at each other again with much embarrassment. With whatever hardships fate had strewed their path, these happy Breton fish-girls were up to this moment in blessed ignorance of the pain and anxiety resulting from small literary efforts. Some subtle and healthy instinct of self-preservation made them now blush and hesitate before taking one step on this dangerous ground.

"Well," Hamor said encouragingly.

"Is it a bird, or is it a fish,
 O waves, O waves;
 A bird that flies, a fish that swims,
 O waves, O waves?
 A little white boat that flies and swims —"

Guenn hesitated, and Jeanne went on: —

"Under the clouds, out on the sea,
 O waves, O waves."

Guenn resumed briskly: —

"What do I see in the little white boat,
 O waves, O waves;
 Under the clouds, out on the sea,
 O waves, O waves?
 A fisherman with a long brown beard?
 No fisherman sails the little white boat,
 O waves, O waves."

"A tall dark man, in a long black robe,
O waves, O waves,
Under the clouds, out on the sea,
O waves, O waves,
In the little white boat that flies and swims
The dark man sails, and sails to shore,
O waves, O waves."

This original production was rendered into Plouvenec-French with frequent pauses and more or less irrelevant discussion between the two young girls. Once, as a lapse of memory threatened to swamp the little white boat, a shrill voice from the boxes suggested the missing line, and again an involuntary childish giggle, instantly suppressed, betrayed Nannic's huge delight in the situation; but when they looked at him he was crooning to himself, his eyes raised in complete unconsciousness to the rafters.

"Now I call that very fine," said Hamor gravely: "I like that very much, particularly 'O waves, O waves'; it reminds me of something, upon my word it does; but what is it all about?"

"Oh, he can go on all day," Guenn explained with pride, "that's all we could remember, but he's been going on ever since. He's singing still about the dark man; he's landed him now." She laughed, and looked lovingly at the little farceur. "He is only making a chant, you know, telling a story, it does n't mean anything."

But as Hamor detected a leer of infinite malice on the gargoyle's features, he said carelessly: "I don't know whether it does or not: we shall see. Come, Guenn, let us try this in the rough. If I had a boat here, and an oar; not a little white boat by any means, but a big, ugly scow —"

"I can bring you an oar," cried Jeanne eagerly.

Hamor was soon nervously throwing upon the paper, in rapid, rough, apparently crazy charcoal strokes, and unintelligible masses of shadow, his first conception of his "great picture."

Meanwhile, whether Nannic had made his discovery by force of imagination or of his extremely observant eyes, a little white boat, in point of fact, had approached the shore, and a tall dark man, in a long black robe, had landed, and was looking with kind eyes in familiar faces, and exchanging cordial greetings with every man, woman, and child he met. Thymert had not come over to Plouvenec in several weeks. To-day a little matter of business summoned him, and it occurred to him that he ought not to delay longer his visit to Monsieur Hamor. The curé, as a rule, did not recognize or suffer from the inexorable social necessity of returning visits which weighs down the whole civilized world, and his consciousness of an obligation arose, in this case, from his innate kindness of heart rather than from any sense of conventional indebtedness. "If I do not go to see Monsieur Hamor after what has happened, he will imagine that I am offended. I am not; I find him very amiable, — for a stranger, — therefore I will go."

As young Morot's boat was running handsomely along, half way over to Plouvenec, it met Rodellec's going out. "How are you, Hervé? All well at home?"

"All well, monsieur le curé," answered Rodellec, pulling off his *béret* and showing his white teeth amicably.

"What!" thought the priest, "no complaints, no whining? This is singular."

"Children well, happy, and busy, Rodellec?"

"Well and happy and busy, thank God, monsieur le curé, — good children, — all I have left now," he added

from sheer force of habit, but forgot to lower his voice and wipe his eyes. On the contrary, he shouted it in trumpet tones on the breeze, as the boats were passing, and stood in the stern of his little craft, his handsome head bare, a picture of upright and jocund manhood.

"Now I wonder what this means," mused Thymert, feeling at once anxious.

The curé went into the Voyageurs to bid madame good-morning. He frankly mentioned what he had to do in the village, and added: "I shall also call upon Monsieur Hamor."

"Ah, that will be a pleasure to both," responded madame imperturbably. "Shall I tell him?" she asked herself. "No, for then he will not go. Perhaps he would feel more reconciled if he should go and see for himself how things are. A man must see things for himself."

Since that merry evening when she had stood at her door with the young girls, and seen Guenn's beautiful, excited eyes watching Hamor, madame knew that neither priest, sagacious woman, nor any other power could keep the child from rushing on to meet her fate; but madame herself had been surprised at the promptness of Guenn's surrender. Had Hervé Rodellec not fatuously committed himself one evening, she would not have suspected him of complicity in the misfortune.

"You know, madame," he said, "my little girl is posing now for Monsieur Hamor. A caprice—yes. But what can a father do?" He laughed his genial paternal laugh. "These girls take things in their own hands nowadays."

Madame slowly turned her placid countenance upon him and inquired: "What does her caprice bring you a month, Rodellec?" But while she told herself she

perceived the print of his cloven hoof in the affair, to what extent he was responsible she had no means of knowing, since Guenn never exposed the beauties of the Rodellec interior. So madame, being granted wisdom beyond most of her sex, deplored the situation, but held her peace and went her way, never worrying or alienating Guenn with anxious advice, never considering it her duty eloquently to depict her views to Monsieur Hamor. She merely waited and watched, and each day confided to the one person in whom she placed absolute trust, — herself: "There is no harm, positively none, only the child has too much heart. It is inconvenient."

"You will find it interesting," she now remarked to the priest. "I have been there once myself. Monsieur Hamor was so amiable as to beg me to come. He wishes also to paint a panel in my dining-room before he goes. Every artist-guest should leave me such a remembrance, Monsieur Hamor suggests."

"He is really very amiable," said Thymert cordially. "He is going to paint a large picture for the chapel too."

The curé bade madame good-morning, she wished him an agreeable visit, and on he went. Passing some young girls knitting and gossiping on a corner, he looked involuntarily for Guenn's bright face, but she was not with them. Rodellec's manner recurred to him. "His smile is more dangerous than his blow. I did not intend to see Guenn to-day, but I must find out what Rodellec meant. Still, if there were any trouble she would let me know. She promised. She gave me her honest little hand." With this comforting thought brooding in his tender eyes, Thymert passed beneath the tired little woman's casement, — there

creating in her feeble being a small flutter of curiosity, — through the archway across the court-yard, up the stairway, and knocked vigorously at Hamor's door.

"Come in," called the painter impatiently, without turning his head. He was too much absorbed in his drawing to care whether the intruder was Staunton, the carpenter, or his new friend the chief of the police. Guenn, too, was intent upon her pose, her head turned away from the door. Jeanne rose with her knitting, and looked in gentle wonder and uncertainty from one to the other. But Nannic, with an utterly unmythic and bad-little-boy shout of triumph, cried lustily: "There now, Guenn Rodellec, perhaps you will believe me next time!"

Guenn dropped the oar which she was wielding with some difficulty in the absence of its normal element, and sprang joyfully towards Thymert. "Oh, there he is, monsieur!" she cried. "Now, we can beg him to help us make our picture." Radiant, free, rosy, the young girl welcomed the priest with her two outstretched hands, looking eagerly over her shoulder at Hamor. "Now we can tell him everything."

"Well, I never was more delighted to see anybody in my life," exclaimed the artist warmly. "Pray pardon my inattention, monsieur le curé. I am so used to people coming in. I was making an important study of Guenn. But everything must give way to this unexpected honor." He did not offer his careless Bohemian boxes to Thymert, but pulled out the seat of honor, the old black-oak chair, with the twining serpent-like roots.

"Dear monsieur le curé," said Guenn, darting about him like an affectionate humming-bird, "you will help us with our picture?"

Thymert raised his hand heavily to his forehead. For perhaps the first time in his life, the simple direct soul was completely bewildered. We? us? ours?—what was the meaning of all this? Guenn hated the strangers and artists. Yet here she was with this successfully smiling young man, never so brilliant and glad, never more beautiful and innocently content. He saw all their faces as in a dream. Little Jeanne over her knitting-needles, and long striped stocking, meek and maidenly; Hamor handsome and cordial; Guenn's rich color and lovely laughing eyes. Suddenly, his glance fell on the pile of boxes crowned by Nannic's malicious face. It is, perhaps, a disguised blessing in this deceptive, mysterious life of ours, that pure hatefulness often strengthens us where pure goodness fails to serve as a tonic. Thymert was very human, and the malicious glee on the distorted face of the deformed child who had never liked him brought him to his senses.

"I have come to return your visit, Monsieur Hamor," he said awkwardly, but with a certain rough dignity. "I am in the village this morning. I am sorry if I disturb you."

"But you do not, does he, Guenn?" Hamor answered in his sunniest and most graceful way. "We were only attempting something. Perhaps you would like to see us at work," he added easily.

Every intimate allusion to Guenn, every "we," cut Thymert to the heart. But the searching cruelty of the eyes peering over the boxes forced him with savage pride to conceal his pain.

"Yes," he answered slowly, "I should like to see what it is that you do here," looking from the beams and rafters to the floor,—turning his dark gaze un-

easily upon the dormer-windows, the granite window-seats, the chimney with its smouldering fire on the hearth, the table with its few books and the blue Dime vase, the easels and palettes and camp-stools and draperies, and all the unknown paraphernalia of art. It did not, indeed, look very terrible; yet Thymert's tortured heart never forgot what he saw for the first time that day, never indeed ceased to remember it with a shudder.

"This charcoal-sketch will not interest you," Hamor said confidently. "We will try something in colors. Posez, Guenn, with the water-jug."

"Yes, sir," Guenn answered with dutiful alacrity.

"Head to the left; right foot forward; droop the left shoulder."

"Can I bear this?" sighed the priest.

"This is only a pot-boiler," explained Hamor cheerfully. "But it's very fair as my pot-boilers go, — and almost finished. Frankly," he said, laughing, "I have painted better pictures, technically speaking; but Guenn was never prettier in anything, and most people care only for prettiness."

"God help us!" thought the silent priest. "A free Breton girl, — and she stoops to that. Free, fearless Guenn Rodellec, tamed, trained, chained, — at the beck and call of a strange man!" He pulled at his soutane, as if it lay too close on his strong breast. Meeting Nannic's ironical scrutiny, he controlled himself. Guenn was smiling at him with frank affection and undisguised pride in her own achievements. Her eager eyes followed every movement of Hamor's controlling hand and head. Thymert saw with inexpressible pain that her whole soul lay supinely at the painter's careless feet. A fierce longing rose within him to sail his boat in a storm far out in an angry sea.

"I must go," he said abruptly. "I have not much time."

"Oh but we haven't arranged anything," exclaimed Guenn regretfully, looking at Hamor.

"That can wait," the painter said courteously, "if monsieur le recteur has no time to-day. We only wished to beg for hospitality at the Lannions a day or two. The prejudices of the world, monsieur le curé, are against us artists. The world objects to our methods, even the Plouvenec world," he went on, laughing. "Knowing you to be a great soul, when I need you, I shall not hesitate to turn to you for aid in my art projects."

"Very good, monsieur, very good," answered Thymert stiffly, feeling himself in no respect the slave of art, and not in the least divining what Monsieur Hamor wanted of him. Guenn's clasped hands on his arm roused him to a clearer conception of his responsibilities.

"You see, monsieur le curé," said the girl, breathlessly, her ardent face near his shoulder, "it is our great picture. I am in the ferry-boat, you know. I am very pretty with the great oar, monsieur says. Of course all the boys would come to see me pose, and they would disturb us in our work. So we want to come over to you, where nobody will care what we do. I told monsieur you would help us. It was my own idea. It is so fortunate that you happen to come in to-day, for we haven't too much time. The weather is about right now," she informed him with her newly gained wisdom. "The light is good. It is for the Salon, you know," her rich glad voice sinking into a pretty hushed tone of awe and excitement.

What cared Thymert for light or the Salon or art-

projects; but the intense desire in Guenn's voice was something real to him, which he was incapable of ignoring. "Child, child," he said, forgetting the painter, forgetting the leer on the pile of boxes, "ask what you wish of me. Thymert and the Lannions are always ready for you when you want them." He gave his hand abruptly to Hamor, and, in an instant, was striding through the court. The gargoyle laughed long and silently.



CHAPTER XIV.



YOU are beautiful, Guenn: remain beautiful for me," worked like a charm on the young girl. She not only remained beautiful, but seemed to grow more dazzlingly lovely each day. The birth of new thoughts, her intense happiness in Hamor's constant presence, her proud realization of his need of her, and her loyal and clever efforts to comprehend his wishes, refined and illumined her face, without depriving it of the old freshness and freedom. No happy bride, blessed in the consciousness of being chosen out of the whole world by her perfect lover, could be more secure in spirit, more radiant, than Guenn was in these days. No gallant young Breton cavalier, leading his Chouans against the Blues, between the mighty granite walls that marked his own fair fields, was ever more ardently loyal to his cause, than this impassioned, faithful heart to what it felt was its high calling. As a rose opens to the summer's warmth, her womanliness awakened more and more, softening much that had been hard in her. Little

roughnesses disappeared, and it was seldom now that the defiant lines settled about her young lips. Yet she lost none of those dominant characteristics which separated her radically from other girls, and made her peculiarly herself, — her boylike instinct for fair play, fiery scorn of a blow in the back, and large-hearted protection of the feeble, undefended, and absent, — attributes seldom, indeed, found or expected in womankind, from its queens down to its fish-girls, but nevertheless worthy of some contemplation on the part of those interested in the higher education of women, as rarer than decorative art, more precious than Sanscrit.

Guenn had all her life been protecting something. At the age of six she was nursing fledglings that had fallen from the nest; and there was not, from that time on, a more common sight in Plouvenec streets than she, — a small, rosy, furiously angry child, — rolling her ragged apron round a decrepit and maltreated dog or cat, valiantly facing a mob of persecuting boys, hitting them well with words or her determined little fist, whichever seemed best to serve the exigencies of the moment. Then there was always Nannic, because he was lame; and, although he had grown so clever, she looked after him still, like an anxious little mother. And there was Jeanne. She abused Jeanne herself at times unconscionably, but woe to any one else who presumed to take liberties with Guenn Rodellec's faithful vassal. In fact, Guenn "loved her people," and protected all who had need of her.

Now this powerful instinct was devoted to Hamor's picture, to Hamor's interests, to Hamor himself. She swept his studio. She put flowers in his vase. She washed his brushes. She gently laid a shawl over him, finding him asleep one day, and received for the atten-

tion a brusque and mannish, "Take the thing away. I hate to be coddled," which ingratitude did not disturb her a whit. Trifles could not affect her now. She was elevated above all petty things. She could even smile when Hamor patted Jeanne's cheek. Jeanne was a child. Jeanne had not entered upon a solemn alliance with monsieur. So Guenn wore an air of inspiration, and grew more beautiful and more bewitching with each new day's bondage to her lord and master. Even Staunton, now working hard on another great landscape on the shore, and at the same time deeply in love with a young Danish girl over at Nevin, was compelled to emerge from his all-absorbing occupations, hopes, and rhapsodies, and observe, when Guenn, smiling charmingly, passed him in the court: "How tall and fine the pretty child is growing!"

Meanwhile, with the awakening of other new sentiments in her active mind, was the confused sense of not possessing all external adjuncts that might be pleasing to Monsieur Hamor. Up to this period she had been superbly indifferent to her toilet. If only the coiffe was spotless, polished, gleaming white, she and all other honest Breton girls practically ignored the patches and deposits of time upon their skirts, aprons, and kerchiefs. They danced at festivals and on market-days with never a thought of their imperfections. The perfect coiffe, indeed, atoned for all defects. And as for Guenn herself, although she saw the rich peasant girls, in old silver embroideries, and broad Breton lace on their caps, and brand-new cashmere skirts, come over from Quimper and Nevin and all around, she saw, too, perfectly well, as everybody with eyes must have seen, that where she stood the best dancers and the best sailors always thronged, — even the seamen of monsieur le comman-

dant, men who had danced with pretty girls in great sea-ports all over the world, — in those heathen lands far away from Bretagne; and many a handsome bronzed face, with *Merle* in white letters on the little blue cap with the two ends of ribbon floating jauntily behind, never looked at the heavy girls from Quimper with all their furbelows, but waited hungrily for a smile or a word from the lovely little being whose grace and wit and careless beauty, as she wound through the interminable mazes of the gavotte, made every man of them blind to her patches and her faded gown.

So Guenn had had no need of finery. Now she began to thirst after it. Monsieur was always talking of color. Monsieur was always talking of form. It seemed to her evident that she could more worthily help along the great work, if she had a new gown with some color and some form, and some bright ribbons beside. One day Hamor found her earnestly scrutinizing herself in a small mirror which hung in the corner of the atelier. He smiled and thought, "All women are alike," — a favorite conclusion of youngish men who pride themselves upon their knowledge of human nature; but his theories were put to rout and confusion when she unabashed smiled sweetly at him, and, continuing her investigations, remarked: "I am trying to find out what pleases you in my face, monsieur. I wish I knew. You see" — with her merriest laugh — "to me it looks so very much like Guenn Rodellec!" staring solemnly into her own great blue eyes, and adjusting her coiffe without a sign of coquetry or embarrassment.

Still her best energies were now directed towards new clothes. The Pardon at Nevin was coming soon. Every one would be there. Hamor would see her dance. It was true he had already seen her dance, here and there,

in an unimportant way ; but he had never seen her compete for the prize, never seen her reeling off before the world, — she thought with a sudden flush in her cheeks, — and win, though girls from seven towns should dance against her. Guenn knew her own powers, and, like the most famous wrestler of Scaer, often generously left the field open to contestants who had yet their laurels to win ; but this time she intended to enter seriously for the prize for the prettiest, as well as that for the longest continued, dancing. He should see her glory. With this in view, she began with innocent diplomacy to take some notice of her neglected swain Alain, her best partner from earliest times, and whom she had cruelly ignored for weeks.

It was by no means an easy matter for a Plouvenec village-girl to accomplish the feat of procuring a new gown. The fathers exacted every penny of the regular earnings. Now and then a stray franc for errands or some other extra service made them rich for the moment ; yet Hamor and Staunton had been more than once surprised and touched to find that Guenn and Jeanne, with splendid improvidence, had actually bought late fall-flowers of a gardener with their few independent sous, and were playing with them, enjoying them, caressing them as if they had a right to the dainty things of life, to the freshness and perfume of flowers. “ No one would believe it,” exclaimed Hamor with enthusiasm, — looking down from his atelier upon the two girls sitting in the court with their posies, — “ no one : I would not believe it myself if I should read it in a book of travels in Brittany. I should say it was all *chic*.”

“ But it looks like the real thing now, does n’t it ? ” Staunton answered kindly. “ Poor little vagabonds ! ”

It is evident, then, that as Guenn had no pennies laid up for a rainy day, and no claim upon her earnings, she must devise some method of making money if she hoped to execute all her plans before the Nevin Pardon. It was not only a new gown that she wished. Her imagination, once roused, would not be quieted. A coiffe with finer, broader lace. That would surely please monsieur, — a fresh kerchief. And then there was one object for which her very soul longed, — something which, it seemed to her, would help smooth away the discrepancies between her life and that of her idol, — discrepancies which in spite of her happiness she perceived clearer each day, — a white rectangular cake of soap.

With soap in the untutored Breton peasant conception of the word she was perfectly familiar. This was a thick and muddy-looking liquid substance kept in a tin can, and commonly employed in the washing of clothes, rarely applied to hands. The fine sweet-smelling solid cake, used by Hamor and the others before going over to lunch, she had at first regarded with discontent and mistrust, but gradually it had begun to have an inexpressible importance in her eyes. She had taken it up, pinched it, smelt of it, when Hamor was not there. She grew ashamed of her brown hands. Every day she had occasion to contrast Hamor's and her own. Surely it was the little white cake that made the difference. And would she not please him more if her hands were white and smooth like his own? Would that not be prettier in the picture? She could but try. Had he not said she must be beautiful for his sake? Ah, what would she not do to please him! If she only had a gown all bunched up behind, with hangers and dangles like the city ladies and travellers who now and then

visited Monsieur Hamor's atelier! "If I could squeeze myself in at the waist, and squeeze myself in at the hands, and squeeze myself in at the feet, but no," she thought, throwing out her chest with a long deep breath in freedom and contempt of squeezing laws, "they can't run: monsieur loves to see me run." Or if she were only as beautiful as the rose-crowned plaster-of-Paris image of Our Lady in the village church, with her downcast lids and the perpetual simper on her thin lips. Guenn had seen in Hamor's little mirror that her own eyes were wide open and bold, and she found her lips too red and pouting, her whole face altogether too brown. She consoled herself with the thought that she pleased him; but naturally she would please him more, the more she improved, and her eager spirit sought continually means of improvement. Soap she must certainly have. A mirror also was one of her aspirations. Well, there were ways and ways for a bright girl, and the stage went three times a week to Quimper, and old André the stage-driver was good to Guenn Rodellec, as indeed were all the men.

One morning before six she stole into the stable-yard where the Quimper stage-driver stood, all ready to mount upon the box and drive with a prodigious noise to the two inns, and then out of the village. Perhaps it was the early morning twilight that made her look so pale, the good-natured driver thought; but, accustomed to crack rough jokes with her, he asked if Alain had deserted her for another lass, seeing that she looked "all eyes." Guenn had no joke in return, but merely slipped a package into his hand. "Sell it for what you can get," she said with painful eagerness.

"What is it, child?" he asked carelessly, accustomed to make all kinds of bargains and commissions for the village girls.

"Only my hair," she answered with a little shiver. The scissors had felt cold as they went plunging through the heavy curling mass, and the very sound of the steel, as she ruthlessly cut tress by tress close to her head, had sickened her. She knew it was silly, and indeed one doesn't need one's hair; it does n't show, and is only a trouble under one's coiffe, she reflected: still she was used to the soft bright waves tumbling down to her knees mornings and nights, and when this dark, cold morning she had gathered it up from the floor it felt human and clinging in her hands. So she shivered, and was a little pale in spite of herself, as she smiled bravely at the stage-driver, and said: "Bring me all the money you can, and you won't tell, will you?"

"H'm," he looked at her curiously. "If I was a young thing like you, I wouldn't cut off my pretty locks for all the furbelows in all Bretagne. It's furbelows you want, now is n't it?"

Guenn nodded.

"For the Pardon?"

She nodded again.

"I wonder who it is," thought the old fellow shrewdly. "Come now, Guenn," he said familiarly. "Take my advice. Let it grow again."

"Ah!" she answered, with a shrug and an involuntary sigh for her shorn glory, "it would take a lifetime to grow as long as that again."

"He is n't worth it, my dear," giving a loud laugh and slapping his horse's neck: "not a mother's son of us is; my word for that."

Guenn colored high, and turned quickly to go.

"What is this?" thought the man. "Where is her saucy tongue? Soyez gentille, Guenn," he called; "come back: we haven't made our bargain." Still

laughing, he went on: "There was Samson: they cut off his hair and his strength with it. Be careful; perhaps you have done as much, little fool!"

"Oh, don't say that, — not that, my good André!" cried Guenn, clasping her hands and staring at him with a frightened look in her eyes. If she had no strength she would not please Hamor: he liked her strength.

"Well, well, if ever I saw you in such a mood!" chuckled André. "Never mind, I will sell your fleece, my poor little sheep: only find your tongue, my girl. If you lose your impudence, Guenn Rodellec, all Plouvenec would be triste," and he scratched his head and looked at her gravely, as if considering a national calamity.

She laughed brightly. "Oh, I'm impudent enough: I'm always Guenn; have no fear, André." Then looking round to see no stable-boy was near: "How much do you think you can bring me?"

"Is there much of it?"

"Bushels!" she exclaimed.

"Perhaps twenty francs; perhaps more."

"Mon dieu!" she cried joyfully. The pitiful sum in return for all that magnificence seemed a fortune to her.

"But I usually get something myself."

"Of course," she answered promptly; "what, André?"

Wiping his mouth on his coat-sleeve: "A kiss from the pretty ones."

One month before, this would have been the opening of a racy dialogue, in which Guenn's lawless, stinging retorts would have drawn an applauding crowd of stablemen round her, and the description of the encounter

would have entertained the village for days. Now, she sprang lightly back, and only said, with an angry flash in her eyes, "And that's what Guenn Rodellec does n't give to you or any man; and you know it as well as I do, André Beuvet. So give me my package: I'll find a better man than you to take it!"

"I've a mind to shake you well," he answered impatiently. "No jokes? No fun? What have you got in your obstinate little head? A better man, indeed! Are n't you ashamed of yourself? Are you trying to be a demoiselle?" he asked, with sudden suspicion.

But now Guenn, with one of her April-day changes, was smiling very sweetly at him and holding out both hands. "Listen, my good André; don't let us quarrel. I'll tell you what I will do: I'll knit you a pair of stockings and give the kiss to little André."

"Give him the stockings and me the kiss," returned the man, instantly pacified and glad to joke: "I have stockings enough, and the little gars is spoiled with kisses all day long."

"I can't help that," said Guenn, laughing; "his face is smoother and rounder than his old bear of a father's. Now don't abuse me any more, André. I'll be at the Voyageurs when you come back to-night. Get all you possibly can, you dear, good, nice André!" she added in a caressing tone, with a little ingratiating pat on his coat-sleeve.

"Dear, good, nice André indeed!" he grumbled, but thrust the precious package deep in an inside pocket, and resolved to make that old fiend of a Jewess in Quimper, who bought Breton girls' beautiful hair for the greedy Paris market, for once in her life pay a decent price. "When the handsomest lass in Plouvenec sells her hair, poor little fool, it would be a sin, by Our Lady, to let it go for a song." He smiled good-

humoredly, having a soft spot in his heart for little Breton beauties, and when he gathered up the reins and started off gloriously from the Voyageurs, he exchanged a glance of deepest significance with the young girl, who stood watching him with great eyes under the oak on the common.

She put her hand instinctively up to her head as the stage went off. There was a queer empty feeling under her coiffe: there was a queer empty feeling in her heart. That, no doubt, she reasoned, was because it was a cold morning, and she had risen very early to perform her sacrificial act, and had not slept much the whole night long, so many excited thoughts were flying through her brain. She felt chilly, and went into the Voyageurs kitchen to warm herself. Madame gave her some hot soup, and was altogether so calmly cheerful and kind that Guenn began to be quite happy again, in spite of the secret under her coiffe.

"I shall buy a blue dress," she thought, "very dark and mixed-looking. He likes things dark and mixed-looking: he can use them; and he will surely be pleased at the Pardon if he sees that the lace on my coiffe is good and broad and of a pretty design." Already she felt herself leading off with Alain to the sound of the shrill bagpipes; and by the time she went round to the studio she was in her merriest, most charming mood, and had quite forgotten the fatal snip-snap of her dull scissors.

When the stage came in that evening she was wild with excitement, and could scarcely restrain her impatience until she could escape from Jeanne and respond to André's signal. It seemed to her the men would never let him go: there they stood making their stupid jokes and laughing loud, while she was waiting in a fever of expectation. At last he came

"How much?" she whispered, as he put the money in her trembling hand.

"Thirty francs."

Guenn jumped for joy.

"The woman said she never saw such hair."

Guenn was silent a moment. A happy sob escaped from her overcharged heart, and her eyes filled with tears of tenderness. It seemed fitting that they should praise her hair, — then it was worthier of being secretly offered to him. Quickly recovering herself she answered saucily: "No, I don't suppose she ever did. Nobody ever did. Nice, pretty hair to bring me all this money," she exclaimed, patting her head approvingly. "And a thousand thousand thanks for your trouble, André," warmly shaking his hands.

"I shall keep my eye on you at the Pardon. I shall discover what gars it is," he said indulgently. "Mind you look fine now, vain little peacock!"

"Fine? Only wait and see, André! One does not dance every day. One is not always young and pretty, and" — lowering her voice and looking cautiously around — "one is not always — rich!"

Her hand closing triumphantly upon the treasure in her pocket, she sprang back to Jeanne, conscious that she was withholding two enormous secrets from that faithful little soul, — her loss of hair, her gain in worldly possessions. She did not reproach herself for her reserve. This concerned monsieur; and in general when the conqueror "monsieur" enters, girl's friendships suffer a decline and fall. Guenn's irresistible laugh sounded everywhere on the common that night. She was never more daring and mischievous, springing gayly about with incessant jokes and pranks. As intermezzo between all her eccentricities, she dilated with glowing anticipations upon the Pardon *à* vin.



CHAPTER XV.

ANY Pardon in Guenn's estimation was an occasion of unmitigated and vast enjoyment. But a Pardon illumined by monsieur's presence, and where she would dance before him in a blue gown, was a dream of bliss almost too rapturous for mortal girl to sustain. A Pardon, according to the cynical views of an old French writer, differs somewhat from Guenn's rose-colored impressions.

A chapel, a fountain, a place consecrated by the remembrance of some saint or miracle, — so, freely rendered, runs his text. The people confess; they indulge in superstitious practices; they buy crosses, rosaries, and images, with which they touch the statue of the demi-dieu; they rub foreheads, knees, paralyzed arms against the marvellous stone, or throw pennies and pins into the fountain; they dance; they drink to excess; they return home poor in pocket, but rich in hope. The superstition is a remnant of the most remote worship of

water, the ancient faith of the Gauls, who consecrated in their fountains the gold seized from their enemies.

Little cared Guenn Rodellec for the faith of the ancient Gauls the morning when she and Jeanne and Nannic climbed into a hay-cart already crowded with laughing girls, and started off for Nevin. On the road they passed the three painters, who swung their hats in jocose holiday greeting. They had come through a shady village whose pretty Breton name signifies "the place of tears," and were going at an excellent pace, only stopping now and then to examine Druid stones, of which there were several on this road. A dolmen, remains of a cromlech, and a trembling stone which would only respond, according to the folk, to the touch of a pure hand. Here young lovers came to test each other's truth. There was also a menhir thirty feet high, — perhaps a sun-stone in the worship of the ancient Armoricaus. Young married couples would steal to it in the dusk, lay their breasts against its rough sides, and confide to it their dearest wishes for happiness and home. Guenn wished she were walking, too ; but it was a tramp of ten miles, and in consideration of her dancing she had with exceptional docility acted upon Jeanne's advice to husband her strength. "What will he say when he sees me?" she was continually asking herself with a thrill of joyful anticipation. Arriving, she had no interest until he came ; then followed him as closely as a certain new feeling of shyness would permit.

On a species of shelf against the one wall of the rude dancing-room, which was shaded by a roof, and had three sides open to the weather and spectators, sat the man with the *bigniou*, or Breton bagpipe, already in position. The dancing had not begun, but he was indulging in startling preludes which increased his im-

portance in the eyes — or rather ears — of his countrymen. With jolly mien, distended shining cheeks, and crossed legs, he sat far above the common herd, and blew like the great god Pan.

"Oh, I must have him!" exclaimed Hamor rapturously, plunging into his sketch-book and forgetting the crowd.

"I say, Hamor," Staunton said, "do you know, I think Guenn is waiting for you. She seems to be hanging about."

"What does she want?" indifferently and without looking up. "She's not on duty to-day."

"Well, I don't know," Staunton returned in his low, kind voice. "She's got some new toggery, I think. Perhaps she wants you to see it. There would be nothing very heretical about that, would there?"

"No; I think we must allow a pretty girl her small vanities. Just wait till I get the expression of that fellow's hand, and then I'll attend to her."

"The little thing does n't look quite happy," Staunton added, turning away.

Hamor finished his sketch at his leisure. As he put his book in his pocket he saw Guenn standing entirely alone at a little distance, and, as Staunton had said, not looking quite happy. In her present relationship to Hamor she was too artless to force herself to chat with other girls, and, concealing her desire for his approval, await his verdict with outward composure. Her innocent eyes were fixed upon him with a certain anxiety, and she was clasping and unclasping her hands nervously.

"Good heavens! I hope she is n't going to cry." He went towards her. With a friendly quizzical glance he slowly inspected her toilet. He saw that the new ker-

chief in shaded reds was a kind he had said he liked, — that the coarse blue dress was agreeably dingy; and though Guenn would have been sadly disappointed had she known that he did not observe the design of her Breton lace, he did notice that something airy and soft encircled the lovely face now looking up to him with a troubled smile. He took off his hat, made a profound bow, and said with grave ceremony, — “Madame!”

Guenn was enchanted. Any small joke of Hamor’s was always to her the rarest and most delicious wit. “I please him!” she thought, her waiting and doubts forgotten, perfect joy in her heart. Blushing, smiling, roguish, she made him her lowest *révérence*. “Monsieur!” she said in a demuréd voice, through which her gladness seemed to bubble irrepressibly, and the next instant was darting about in the crowd, bestowing freely the words, looks, and smiles she had kept in reserve until her fate was sealed.

“I please him! I may be as happy as I choose!” She squeezed and shook Jeanne with all her strength, and lifted her from the ground.

“Going in for feats of strength, Guenn?” laughed Alain admiringly. “The lifting has not begun.”

“No, Alain; that was an extra. I had to wake Jeanne up, she looked so *bête*. It’s a sin and a shame to be dull at a Pardon. Now behave, Jeanne!”

“If you’ll please not take my breath away, because I shall want some to dance with,” Jeanne begged meekly.

“O Alain, we will dance as we never danced before,” Guenn exclaimed with an eloquent look.

“And the village is so full,” said the young man gayly. “All the towns far and near have come. We

will show them how we dance in Plouvenec, eh Guenn?"

She smiled and nodded at him, and the deluded youth did not dream that all the towns far and near, and all the noisy, jostling crowd were as nothing to Guenn in comparison with one foreign gars; that she was wildly longing to begin the gavotte before him as her one spectator, and to read in his smiling, uncertain eyes the assurance of her triumph.

This Nevin may be described, without much exaggeration, as occupied, possessed, and dominated by foreign artists, with a sufficient number of the original race left to serve as models for the invaders. Such was the art atmosphere or art mania prevailing in this painters' paradise, that few tourists were endowed with sufficient strength of mind to resist it. However innocent of art aspirations they had strayed there, however devoid of talent they might be, in the course of a week they were apt to merge into inspired Nevinists, zealous devotees of water-colors or oil. Only a great soul could withstand the seductions of Nevin ten days, and if any person ever escaped from the village without so much as making a sketch, his action has not been recorded, and his own statement would be received by the Nevinists with utter incredulity.

No selection was necessary in Nevin; one could stroll out at random, simply set up one's easel and camp-stool and begin. Benign and indulgent nature had arranged an infinity of subjects. Wherever one turned one's eyes was a choice little landscape begging to be transferred to canvas and framed. A winding, shallow stream, foaming over most attractive rocks, between picturesque banks and conventionally drooping trees, small, quaint mills, and thatched cottages of the

most pleasing kind, apparently designed by a special providence for water-color gems, hill-slopes smooth as a lawn, and irreproachable woods, were the delight and pride of the Nevin artists. Yet, in spite of these legitimate fascinations, a visitor of an hour was often capable of saying with cold ingratitude: "Yes, it is a lovely nest, but it is a nest all the same, and one has seen it all before. The little mill, the little stream, the stepping-stones and the foam, — why it's a perfect model for a child's drawing-book; nothing could be prettier or less unexpected." And after leaving the faultless village, the long stretch of bare white road between the rugged walls, with their tangled masses of rough growth, gave one a sense of freedom and distance, and one drew a breath of pure relief, feeling the broadness of the breezy fields of purple heather, rising slowly towards woods whose lofty tops touched vast cloud-masses, and whose cool, gloomy shades teemed with silence and mystery. And the farther from Nevin one went, — thereby reducing the danger of being hanged, drawn, and quartered for defying public opinion, — the greater one's courage grew, until one found one's self actually saying: "I don't like your prettily picturesque; I don't like your Liliputian charming; I don't like Nevin!"

To-day the Nevin faction was everywhere prominent. The Pardon was a ceremony centuries old, — a festival that would have taken place had never a strange foot trod Nevin streets, had never a stranger's eye rolled in a fine frenzy before Nevin picturesqueness. But the young men in brown velveteen, and the young women in Rubens hats and Velasquez frills mingled with the folk with amiable condescension, smiling graciously upon the motley costumes and the rough sport. "For us these attitudes, for us these colors, for us this naïve

display of the habits of a primitive people. How picturesquely historic, how vividly antique!" So with a cormorant power of appropriation, the strangers swallowed the Breton Pardon.

Guenn was everywhere present. A score of voices asked: "Who is that beautiful girl with the bold eyes and the graceful movements?" The peasants answered: "It's Guenn Rodellec, of course; who else could she be?" The painters: "It's Hamor's model; lucky dog!"

A lady stood by one of the booths with Hamor and Staunton, laughingly twirling one of the numerous fortune-telling wheels. She was a faithful, hardworking artist, wearing a small hat and no lace frills. In general in Nevin the broader the hat the narrower the talent, the more expansive the frills the more limited the diligence. Three times she twirled and lost, yet mottoes and small prizes were plentiful. As she turned away with a jest, she felt a little pull at her elbow, and saw an eager, brilliant face close by her shoulder.

"Here, mademoiselle," and Guenn thrust a box of sweetmeats in her hand.

"But why, child?" drawing back a little, eying her curiously.

"You have lost every time. It is a pity always to lose: I have gained everything; even the gypsy woman with the serpent in the tent over there gave me a good fortune, and she is a witch, you know, and has the evil eye. Take it, mademoiselle."

"You are very generous," said the young artist, smiling and looking at her with interest.

"Même chose," returned Guenn carelessly.

"Who are you, child? I have never seen you at Nevin."

Once, in the days of her freedom, Guenn would have answered with an insolent "I'm Guenn Rodellec; who are you?" Now she said, with a pretty and confident glance at Hamor, pointing her thumb at him: "His model," proud to follow his chariot, a nameless slave.

"What a beautiful and remarkable girl," murmured the lady in English.

Hamor smiled and twirled his mustache.

Some acquaintances, also painters, had joined the group and were watching the little central figure with undisguised admiration. Guenn scowled at them an instant, then turned to Hamor: "I must go now," she said abruptly.

"Wait a moment; mademoiselle wishes you to wait."

"Yes, do wait; and I will take your bonbons for luck."

"That is nice of you," Guenn responded calmly.

"But give me something in remembrance too," the young lady continued, delighted with the girl's frankness, beauty, and the graciousness of the impulse which had led this village child to wish to share her good luck with a less fortunate being: "something I can keep; one of these pretty pins, if you would —"

"Gladly, mademoiselle," and Guenn divested herself of one of her trophies. She was decorated like a field-marshal blazing with orders at a court-ball, her kerchief being adorned with rows of long wax-headed pins in all colors, with pendants and glittering tinsel chains, — tributes of devotion from half the sailors and well-to-do young farmers at the Pardon.

"Why did you choose that color?" asked the artist, taking the soft-blue ornament and fastening it in her dress.

"Because it's the prettiest, and the color of mademoiselle's eyes," Guenn said simply, without the least intention to flatter.

A murmur of admiring comment followed in English.

"She does you credit, Hamor," said a Nevin man.

"Who would expect that repartee from a Plouvenec fish-girl?" added another.

"The fact is," Hamor returned, laughing a little, "I hardly recognize her with these new social graces. She is in a surprisingly good mood. Guenn is the handsomest girl I ever saw in my life, and I'm doing some pretty fair work with her; but as for amiability, the less said the better. Happily it is not an essential."

Guenn, hearing his dear voice speak her name, looked up at him with a grateful smile.

"Oh, Mr. Hamor," cried the young lady reproachfully, "she's the most charming little thing in the world, and has the sweetest temper, I am sure."

Guenn was staring in a friendly way at them all, her hands on her hips, swinging herself gently to and fro in time to the enlivening strains of the carousel, where Nannic, dizzy but ecstatic, was soaring proudly aloft, taking his seventh aerial excursion upon a foaming wooden charger with scarlet ears.

"Your name is Guenn?" asked the artist, merely to prolong the conversation.

"Yes, I'm Guenn," wondering if Hamor liked a plain gray dress and linen collar, and wishing she could see the lady's hands ungloved.

"But you do not know me?"

"Oh, yes, I do: you are Monsieur Staunton's sweetheart."

The stranger blushed deeply. She and Staunton were still in the stage of vague and pleasurable uncer-

tainty, and she was not prepared for this uncompromising directness.

The young Englishman came promptly to the rescue: "But, Guenn, you wear no end of pretty things; why have you more than anybody else?"

"Because I am the favorite, to be sure," raising her eyebrows with some surprise, as if everybody ought to know that self-evident truth. "Good-day; I'm going."

"I should like to see you again," remarked the young lady, recovering her composure.

"Oh, you'll see me dance, of course," Guenn said brightly; "everybody'll see me dance. You'd better get a good place soon," she said eagerly to Hamor, "so that you can see me wherever I go. Hark! Don't you hear? That's the call: we're going to begin." She clasped her hands above her head, and giving him one intense look of excitement, joy, and devotion, she sprang rapidly through the crowd, pushing and elbowing her way freely towards Alain, who was spinning along with equal momentum from the opposite direction. Smiling broadly upon the three judges with a deliberate intention of prejudicing their opinion, she took her place in the line: but such audacious wiles were superfluous; for, had her feet been less light and untiring, her movements less elastic and graceful, where was the man who could resist her lovely face?

The gavotte began. The bagpipes shrieked their monotonous shrill tune. Back and forward, balancing, turning, passing on, wreathed the interminable line of couples,—peasants in the distinctive dress of their villages and districts; heavy young men and women taking their pleasure soberly, not knowing what to do with their feet, but pushing on with stolid endurance;

awkward and grinning youths and maidens taking their pleasure shyly, but yielding gradually to its intoxication; handsome sailors from the Merle, dancing easily with a superior air of worldliness, giving one another knowing winks in the midst of their rustic conquests; peasant heiresses, conscious of their prerogative and of much silver embroidery, and over careful of their steps, — such were the dancers springing, shuffling, moving on and on, as a rule with more good faith than grace, to the indefatigable shriek of the bagpipes and their own ever-increasing laughter and noisy talk.

Perfect in rhythm, exquisite in the free grace of her motion, Guenn Rodellec danced with a passionate abandon which captivated the painters and turned the elderly brains of the rustic judges. Her small head erect, her smiles by turns mocking and sweet, her cheeks flushed deliciously, her light little figure balancing, swaying, retreating, beckoning the enamoured Alain on, her clear eyes seeking Hamor's with a kind of proud pleading, — the girl was a breathing poem.

The music stopped. They called her name. She went forward to receive the prize for the best dancing. It was a long light silver chain. She took it with a little cry of pleasure. Hamor, smiling kindly at her, was standing near. "Let me put it on for you," he said, throwing it lightly over her shoulders. Guenn's eyelids drooped till the dark lashes shaded her cheeks, and her heart beat faster from his attention than from all her rapid exercise.

"Aha," laughed a Nevin artist. "You flirt with them, do you?"

"Never," returned Hamor with dignity. "I am merely kind to them."

After a pause, of inhuman brevity it would have

seemed to most people, the musician sounded the call, and the same couples for the most part formed for the more important trial, the longest continued dancing.

"This is the greater honor," Guenn confided to Hamor in an excited whisper.

"Then I hope you may get it."

"Ah, now I have no fear," she said sweetly.

She took her place, smoothed her coiffe, already as smooth as glass, repinned her red kerchief, and patted her skirts, as if some unforeseen looseness, some stray end or fold in her extremely compact little costume might impede her movements or lessen her powers of endurance. This was going to be a very different kind of contest, she well knew. It was not speed or lightness this time, and other girls were sound of wind and strong of limb. She straightened herself and looked very much in earnest. "We must not laugh and talk at first, Alain," she warned. Alain assented, as deeply impressed as she with the vastness of the moment. Guenn turned and cleverly measured her foes. "There's that proud thing from Trévignan. She tossed her head at me. She thinks she's going to win."

"Toss yours —"

"Why, I did, simpleton. I've tossed it at every good dancer in the line. Alain, I shall *die* if we don't win! Wait —"

She had spied Nannic leaning on a cider-keg in a corner. In an instant she was near him. "Nannic — Nannic, it is luck?" bending over the pale face of the self-appointed oracle. "Quick," she begged softly, "is it luck?"

"It is luck, this time," croaked the child with mysterious emphasis.

Back she flew to Alain just in time to begin. "Luck, luck!" cried the bagpipes, "Luck!" echoed her happy heart, and she heard an emphatic "Luck!" in every stamp with which honest Alain marked the time, self-contained reserved stamps indeed, now since breath was precious. She saw Hamor's face and Nannic's, her own grew white with excitement, as she moved at first with measured gentle step. On went the monotonous hornpipe or jig, round and round moved the long circle of the gavotte, after a half-hour growing perceptibly smaller. The Trévignan heiress was crimson to the temples, and panting audibly. Many an honorable rival had retreated to gasp for breath outside. Then Guenn threw prudence to the winds. "Allons!" she cried and danced as she never danced before. "Faster!" she called to the last relay of musicians, then laughingly beckoned them to descend from their perch. Wondering, steadily playing, they slowly obeyed. Every eye was on her. Her magnetism controlled the room. Not a trace of fatigue showed itself in her brilliant little face or in her buoyant movements. Imperious, lovely, audacious, laughing, she led the dancers with a sudden bound out of the building into the village-street, where, in this vital moment, the free air and sunshine summoned her with irresistible force. By the booths and the hurdy-gurdies back and forth went the line, now reduced to ten or fifteen couples, and followed by the crowd with the intense interest which a genuine race of any description always inspires. Again Guenn's clever eyes took account of the weaknesses of her adversaries. "Brigitte has her hand on her side, and Marie is pale about the mouth. O joy!" Towards the church where the Pardon ceremonies that morning had begun with the proces-

sion of chanting priests, and the train of men and women with tall tapers, and gold and white banners, moving three times round the graveyard, this charming little imitation of the Pied Piper was now leading them, with a refinement of strategy, up hill. But the exhausted nature of the whole assembly could endure no more. One after another, the couples retired to private life. Last of all the bagpipes expired with a wheeze of fatigue. Alain, whether from gallantry or want of breath, had already stopped, and Guenn stood facing the crowd alone and victorious.

She extended her arms wide and threw them back, as if to exhibit beyond a doubt to all mankind the veritable person of the victor, then let them slowly fall, her lips parted, breathing fast more from excitement than fatigue. It was the zenith of her glory. She raised her impassioned eyes towards the sky: she saw the green hill slopes and tree-tops beyond the narrow village-street, and the small stone houses and the waiting crowd with all the familiar faces watching her. Her father and Loïc and Hoël; the handsome sailors of the *Merle*; Meurice and André smiling broadly at her; the girls she had always known; and all the fish-wives of Plouvenec. It was her world witnessing her triumph. She could lay it now at Hamor's feet. These poor laurels, fairly won, were the best she knew. Trembling with emotion, her whole ardent soul called to Hamor's. Her beautiful eyes sought his with a passionate yet childlike prayer. "Your smile too, O my master!" they pleaded, "your smile, to crown my joy."

Hamor had watched her steadily and with extreme pleasure, but at this moment he happened to be discussing a moral point with considerable animation. The

Danish girl had remarked that it would be a pity little Hélène should grow vain and spoiled, — posing so young, and continually hearing her beauty discussed in detail. Hamor argued that she was far better off, serving as a useful study to the painters, whatever the stimulating effects upon her self-esteem, than if she should grow up in utter unconsciousness of her beauty to toil and become coarse and ugly with sardine-packing and rough work.

Guenn saw his face turned from her, — his face alone, in this great moment, — his face alone in this great crowd. She pressed her hand suddenly to her side. What she felt was akin to strong physical pain. There was, with the cruel disappointment, a look of startled incredulity in her face. She stretched her head forward. Her eyes dilated. He would surely look. Bending easily towards the young artist, Hamor was fluently expounding his comfortable sophistries. Guenn made one impetuous step towards him. Her nature instinctively prompted a fierce attack of the lady and a storm of open reproach to Hamor. But love and pain had begun their work of discipline. She turned to Alain and Jeanne who were nearest, and, moving heavily, as if all her strength and buoyancy had left her, said with a strained look about the mouth: "I shall never dance again!"

What was it all worth! The long waiting; the glowing anticipations; the sacrifice of her soft, shining hair; her eager hope to please him with the poor little gown so dearly bought; the admiration in the bold eyes of the Merle sailors; the envy of the girls; the stirring call of the bagpipes; the rapture of the circling gavotte; the joy in being young and strong and lightest of foot and prettiest of face; and all the ex-

uberance of life and pride and ambition that had caused her in the intensity of her triumph to face the whole village and the whole unknown world beyond in tacit challenge,—imperiously demanding, “Is there then anything more glorious than this, to be Guenn Rodellec and win both prizes in public contest with the best dancers of all Cornouaille?”—what was it worth? What was life itself worth? He had turned away his face. If she could flee into dark woods and crawl into a cave and lie upon the ground and die! It was too light here, and the people made a cruel noise.

“Take me away,” she cried hoarsely to Alain.

“But the prize, Guenn, the prize!” exclaimed Jeanne. “They are waiting to give it to you. Oh, it is beautiful! Oh, how glad I am! Oh, I knew you would win!”

“Have I won?” Guenn shivered from head to foot.

“Are you mad?” laughed Jeanne.

“It is fatigue. She must have one swallow of grog,—no more,” Alain said authoritatively. “Jeanne, you wait here with her. I will bring it.”

“And you can wear the beautiful silver embroidery when you dance at the next Pardon.”

“I shall never dance again,” Guenn repeated with a pitiful wail in her voice.

Patient Jeanne shrugged her shoulders. Was not Guenn always odd?

But Nannic, who unperceived had limped up to them, stood looking at his sister, nodding his head in slow, solemn acquiescence, not with his mocking air, but as if something akin to pity were stirring in his ugly face.

“O Nannic! O Nannic!” Guenn grasped his arms convulsively.

"Go and get the prize," said the boy in a curt tone. "All the fools are watching. Go, Guenn."

She obeyed. White and listless she stood again before the judges, received the prize and her friends' congratulations.

"She's done up this time in spite of her boasts," sneered the Trévignan heiress.

"It was too long," answered the boatswain of the Merle bluntly. "She need n't have danced so long to show us that she's the best dancer, as she is the prettiest lass in all Cornouaille. Every man with eyes in his head knows that."

Loïc Nives had pulled Rodellec's sleeve as Guenn's imploring gaze sought Hamor's in vain. "Did you see?" he asked in a jealous whisper. "Did you see her look at that gars?"

Rodellec turned, and stared with evil significance in Nives's sullen eyes. "What I want to know," and an ugly emphasis fell upon each word with which the father aspersed his child, "is — *who — gave — her — her — clothes?*"

"Curse him!" Nives's voice trembled with rage and hate.

The two went aside and spoke low together. As they turned suddenly they almost stumbled over Nannic.

"Out of the way!" Rodellec exclaimed harshly. "Can't I move without having you on my heels?"

"I'm not following you, not you — not you —" Nannic chanted with his peculiar stare over his father's left shoulder. Then he had made his way to his sister.

It was not until after the wrestling-matches that Hamor was again near Guenn. Seeing her, he said amiably: "I must go and congratulate my little model, who is bursting with pride, I presume, and sighing for

more worlds to conquer. She would never forgive me, if I should fail to pay my respects with her other swains."

"That is thoughtful," replied the Danish girl approvingly. "Please tell her for me how beautifully she danced. It was as if she wore Hans Andersen's Two Little Dancing Shoes."

"Well, Guenn," Hamor said heartily, holding out his hand with a smile, "this is the happiest day of your life, I suppose. I never saw anything like your dancing."

"Did you see it?" Guenn was looking on the ground, drawing figures in the dust with her foot.

"See it? Of course I saw it. Every step. I was proud of you. I am delighted that you won."

"Are you glad?" looking up now with a strange wistfulness, and speaking very gently. This was what her soul had craved, but it came too late.

"What possesses her now?" Hamor wondered. "Is it the sulks or the reaction?"

"Guenn," he said, in his most fatherly tone, "if I were you, I would n't stand about so much. I would sit down and rest, and eat and drink something, or you'll be fit for nothing to-morrow, you know."

She smiled bravely. He needed her still. Our picture needed her. That comfort was left.

"Thanks, monsieur. I am not weary. I shall look very pretty for you to-morrow. Have no fear."

Hamor rejoined his friends, stopping suddenly on the way to sketch Hervé Rodellec and Loïc, still standing apart, their heads together in sombre talk. "Mischief brewing for somebody, and happily a good genre picture as they stand. I am grateful to the rascals for a new idea — and their most interesting profiles," Hamor went carelessly on. He had no time to draw Nannic, who

lay on his back at full length on the grass, staring vaguely up at the sky. Rodellec spoke to him. The boy, muttering to himself, did not answer. Rodellec shrugged his shoulders, but took the precaution to increase the distance between them. Nannic very gradually lessened it without changing his attitude, or ceasing his incantations, working himself along the grass in complete unconsciousness of all mundane things. Rodellec lowered his voice. But Nannic had excellent ears. "They are blasting at Trévignan," he heard distinctly. "One of us, with a good horse, can manage it in two hours." "You," replied Rodellec. "They will miss you less." After this, Nannic's expression became singularly pure and rapt, and the two men forgot him.

There was, in general, an abundance of rough sport at the Pardon, a remarkable misuse of muscle, an enormous waste of brute force in unscientific trials of strength. The strangers, however, found the vigorous wrestling worth watching, even with a certain enthusiasm. A famous Scaer wrestler threw every adversary flat upon the turf, almost with a touch, and won the plaudits of the whole dense ring of spectators, standing in a field on a hill overlooking pretty Nevin.

Roused to unusual interest in feats of strength, and chatting about the sport of various lands, the painters, with the crowd, strolled down to the village. "These fellows have enormous strength," Hamor was saying, "but half of it goes to waste. Now look there,—not a man has raised that weight to the highest point. I'll bet a hat I can do it, and the fact is I have n't much muscle."

"Done!" said Staunton, comparing Hamor's slender frame with the stalwart sailors standing near.

Hamor laughed. "I had no intention of competing."

"Oh do," said the Danish girl. "I really wish you would."

"In that case," began Hamor gallantly, and stepped forward among the men. Some one was swinging the heavy mallet as he drew near. Up flew the measure of the blow, not reaching the highest figure but approaching it. "That's the highest mark reached to-day," said the crowd, and Hervé Rodellec, well pleased and boastful, began to explain his peculiar system to his friends.

"Allow me," Hamor said civilly, taking the mallet from Rodellec's hand. He had the advantage of height, and throwing his arm well back, with no preliminary swings and flourishes, he struck a good straight blow which sent the iron ringing to the top, where it rested suspended a moment before falling.

"Ah! ah!" cried the bystanders. "Come now, Rodellec, beat that!"

"Oh, it requires no strength," Hamor said amiably.

Rodellec snatched the mallet from his hand, and, trembling with rage, struck again. The iron rose but half way. Again and again he tried, but he was too angry to direct his blow. His friends laughed and jeered, as friends are wont to do when one fails in one's specialty, while Hamor carelessly turned away and went on with his party to other joys of the Pardon.

Poor Guenn was longing for the quiet atelier. How glad she should be to begin work again to-morrow! Pleasure was cruel pain she found. Weary and sick at heart, she wandered about wherever Jeanne led the way. For once, the passive little friend was the moving spirit. "She's that proud," commented the jealous girls, "nothing's good enough for her now, after the

two prizes. Look at her airs! Anybody would think she was madame the countess, at the old château, — so weary and languid-like!”

“Guenn!” and Mother Quaper drew near the young girl, decorated with her silver chain, her package of silver embroidery thrust indifferently under her arm, — “Guenn,” in a hoarse whisper, “stiffen! Before the world *starch* is the word. Don’t be flabby. Whatever is the matter with you, let your feelings soak at home, and starch them stiff before the world.”

“Who cares?” said Guenn drearily, but straightened herself a little nevertheless.

“Walk about. Laugh. Make jokes. Don’t be limp. Be starchy. Make the girls mad. And don’t let him see you hanging your head.”

To these words of worldly wisdom, which in substance might have been spoken in the highest society, Guenn responded with a startled, “Him? Who?”

“Bless your heart, I don’t know,” chuckled Mother Quaper; “but some good-for-nothing gars, sure enough. One o’ these days you’ll find out what a fool you were to fret about him. Every woman finds that out sooner or later. But to-day, take my advice, or you’re not the girl I think you are. Stiffen! stiffen!”

Difficult as it is for a girl in love to take any advice whatever, this stirring appeal to Guenn’s pride was not without effect. She was already beginning to stiffen very creditably, when Nannic stood at her elbow.

“Come into the church as soon as he’s gone for a drink. Don’t let him see,” he said. He was for the moment a clever, energetic boy, with something practical on his mind. No weird murmurings and upturned eyes detracted from the directness of his manner. He was gone as suddenly as he had come.

Rodellec soon afforded his children the opportunity for the desired interview. Guenn stole first into the empty church. It was so still there she would have found it restful to remain. Nannic followed.

"Well?" said Guenn.

"I can't stay a minute. I must be down there when he comes out." He then made a communication which roused Guenn like an electric shock.

"The cowards!" she exclaimed angrily.

"Do what you please, only don't make a fuss," said the boy with a philosophical air.

"There's the chief of the police," began Guenn, speaking rapidly, her languor gone, her face keenly intelligent.

"But no one must see you speak to him."

"Of course, of course!" she said hurriedly.

"And he must promise not to know who did it."

"No, no; we can't tell of *him*. But oh, the cowards, the cowards!" she exclaimed in fierce scorn. "Go, Nannic. Hurry back. You are an angel."

"Remember — no fuss!" rejoined Nannic.

When Rodellec, refreshed, reappeared on the village street, Guenn's angel sat at the door where the father had left him, still repeating his weird cadences, elbows on his knees, head on his hands, shrewd eyes half closed; and Guenn was singing loud with the other girls, her spirited head nodding the time, her laughter between the stanzas as gay as ever. If it was a little too gay to be quite natural, no one was so hypercritical as to notice that. The Merle sailors thronged about her. She had a saucy word for each, and queened it with a charming tyranny. Hamor, passing, glanced at her and smiled. "Little coquette! How she revels in it! But one thing is sure: lovely as she is in repose, she is infinitely

more beautiful in action. While I live I never expect to see such a play of emotion on a girl's face, — such warmth, such superb color, such tenderness of outline. I wonder if a refined woman ever had all that. Scarcely possible," he concluded; "there's too much individuality there for civilization."

The gayest and most gallant of the Merle sailors walked proudly by her side. She had no wish to hurt her trusty Alain; but when the heart is full of anxiety and excitement, and one must talk and laugh and conceal one's pain from the world, strangers are better company than old friends. With a friend one grows absent, confesses one's weakness, and forgets one's rôle; while with the stranger, with whom one has no past, it is easier to seem to live in the present. Mother Quaper, watching Guenn's strained mirth, felicitated herself upon her cleverness and the young girl's quick response; while old André was fully convinced that he had at last discovered her secret. This then was the man for whom she had cut off her curly locks. "A handsome gars, to be sure, with a merry eye and a straight leg," mused the old stage-driver. "But she'd better take a Plouvenec man. Fond of a lass, fond of his glass, and has landed in many ports. H'm! Alain's better for the girl. When the other one sails away, she'll listen to reason. Ah, these girls, these girls, how little they suspect that an old fellow like me sees through all the flutterings of their kerchiefs, deep into their foolish little hearts!"

Guenn went bravely on through the long day. From the moment she left the church her brilliant spirits never flagged. Her successes fixed themselves tenaciously in the memory of the people, while the temporary depression, not unreasonably ascribed to physical

fatigue, was now quite forgotten. Yet beneath her caprices and bewitching nonsense her heart was asking wearily, "Will evening never come?" It seemed years to her since the bright morning, when, full of tremulous happiness, she had come forth to conquer. Uncivilized as Hamor considered her, she had been acting her part like a trained woman of the world. New powers were awakening within her. It was a day of lost illusions and misery, yet she was jesting still, as she drove back to Plouvenec in the hay-cart, and as they all stopped and touched the trembling-stone in the twilight, and filled the silent fields with laughter. Unperceived she put both hands to her head. "I am old," she sighed. "I have grown so old to-day I shall never be young again. But there is still something to do, — something to-night, to-morrow, for many days. If only to-morrow would come and make me forget to-day!"

Plouvenec was rougher and noisier than usual that night, crowded with people who had gathered from far and near to go to the Nevin Pardon. Many would not return to their villages and farms until the next morning, but remained to prolong at Plouvenec the material joys of Nevin. Everywhere was incessant carousing. On the common, men and women jostled against one another, — a moving, boisterous mass, — beside the immovable mass of still, dark battlements on the little island. Salt breezes swept in from the sea to cool the hot heads of such as cared to bare their throbbing temples and receive nature's benign cure. But cider and grog flowed fast, and the orange flame, shining through the glass door, drew innumerable victims into its evil glare.

The chief of the police placed two extra gendarmes on duty, and showed his own mild face everywhere.

This was a matter of form which he observed conscientiously. As for controlling his Breton folk after a Pardon, only a Breton could realize the absurdity or any such effort. He was a little surprised when, after nine o'clock, Guenn Rodellec unceremoniously pulled him completely into shadow, out of sight and hearing of the crowd.

"I have been waiting an hour, monsieur," she said breathlessly. "I wanted to speak with you and not be seen."

"Well, what is it, Guenn?"

"I know something that's going to happen; you must stop it, and you must not suspect or arrest the men who do it."

"But that is against the law!"

"Never mind the law; that's what you must do," she answered shortly, — "no more, no less."

"Explain what you mean."

"I shall explain nothing whatever until you promise." She put her hands on her hips and stared at him obstinately.

He hesitated. "Is it something really bad?"

"Very bad."

"Perhaps I shall find it out without you."

"Impossible! I know the village better than you."

"And why can you not tell me?"

She shrugged her shoulders, then seized his arms. "Trust me, monsieur," she said impetuously, "I know what I am talking about. Give me your promise. Let me tell you what to do. Indeed, I know Plouvenec better than you, monsieur; you yourself have no doubt of that."

"But an accessory of a crime," began the young man feebly.

"Bah! The men are the same, whether they do this thing or not. If they mean to do a bad thing, they are as bad as if they had done it. You can't change them, but you can prevent harm to others. Will you, or will you not? If you will not, I shall go to some one else."

He began to suspect who one at least of the culprits was. "You could not prevent the whole thing yourself?" he asked cautiously.

"Well — I could — yes," she answered gloomily; "but it would be bad the next time anything is brewing, you know."

He felt sorry for her. Her voice sounded, for the moment, weary and depressed; and she had been so beautiful and bright all day at the Pardon, and had danced so divinely.

"Well?" she inquired with impatience.

"It's terribly out of order, but I'll do it, since it's you, Guenn Rodellec. I trust you. I promise."

She shook his hand warmly. "Good. Now listen! Two men will try to set fire to Morot's granary to-night. They will light a slow-match; run to the shore, where the boat that brought them will be waiting; come round the point, land again, and show themselves quite harmless and respectable to their friends before they go home. They will both be safe in their beds when the fire breaks out. The slow-match will burn an hour. You see you have only to put it out. That's the beginning and end of the matter."

"I see; and at what time?"

"The two men will come behind the granary just before twelve."

"I will be on the spot myself; I will watch them."

"But you will do no such thing," said the girl impatiently. "You have promised. You will give

them time to get away; you will see nobody; you will know nobody. Don't come till they are gone. There is no danger now that you know; you will have oceans of time."

He shook his head in doubt.

"Don't you see I can't do anything else? I can't, I can't, I can't!" she cried fiercely, forgetting her caution.

"Hush, Guenn! I will do exactly as you wish. No one else knows this, besides you and the two men?"

"Only my brother."

"It would be a bad place for a fire,—those dry buildings, and the wheelwright's workshop, and the horses with all the hay and straw, and madame with her babies so near."

"And the beautiful, beautiful paintings, that one works upon with fine little touches so long, and that one loves so dearly! Ah, how terrible that would be!" clasping her hands.

"Ah yes, Monsieur Hamor's paintings," the young man said innocently. "I had forgotten. Good! We will try to save everything. It is a blessing that you discovered this, for there's scarcely a man fit to hand a bucket to-night. You are a good girl, Guenn."

"That's as it may be," she returned indifferently.

"And you? You will not be watching too?"

"I shall be in bed, like all the honest people who know nothing about it," she sneered.

He perceived at once that she too intended to be conspicuously at home. "It was the right thing to come to me," looking at her approvingly. "You are always clever."

"Oh, I should have come to the curé of the Lannions

if he had been here," she answered bluntly. "I came to you because I had no choice. Good-night, monsieur."

"Good-night, Guenn."

Suddenly she sprang towards him again. "Monsieur," she said in an eager whisper, "if you take away every trace of the slow-match, and keep quiet, and never let on that you suspect anybody, don't you see, it will be the surest way to prevent him — them — from trying it again?"

"Why?"

"Because he, I mean the men, will think Morot's ghost" — she crossed herself with a wholesome respect for the revenant, and hoped she was committing no sin in dragging his influence into the affair — "watches over the place."

"True enough, Guenn. I never thought of that."

She shrugged her shoulders. "Men never think of anything that helps. Now mind you do exactly what I tell you."

"Yes, yes," answered the chief of the police meekly.

She went swiftly across the common. The girls and sailors called to her to stay and sing. Their screaming voices jarred upon her. She did not answer. Some of them seized her. "Don't be proud, Guenn, if you are the best dancer," they cried, laughing and pulling her roughly back. "Stay and be jolly! We sha'n't let you go," said the handsomest Merle sailor, his eyes heavy with grog.

She looked at their faces in the light of the lantern, hanging from a tree and swinging in the wind. The girls were hoydenish, the men excited and flushed. They were quite capable of detaining her in rough sport, and she wished to go on. The boatswain of the Merle

was the oldest man among them, and had the kindest face. With a clever instinct she moved so that her little figure stood close at his side, and her charming face, scarcely reaching his shoulder, looked up to him for protection.

"Make them let me alone," she said simply. "I am tired. I want to go home."

She did not need to ask twice. In an instant the Bacchantes were flung back; and the girl, with neither thanks nor a thought for her rescuer, ran on.

Crouching by the glass door, where the orange light streamed out, sat Nannic. As his sister came near, he merely raised his eyebrows.

She nodded significantly; then said, with her eyes fixed anxiously on the door, "Can you come now?"

"I'm to wait for him. He's afraid of me. He's afraid I heard. He's afraid I'll tell. As if I ever tell! So he's kept me near him all day. As if I would do him any harm! Poor, dear, lame, little me!" In Nannic's leer was a world of malicious triumph.

"Well then, I'll go. I wish you could come too, Nannic," she added gently.

"Can't; and you'd better shoot along pretty fast, — let me tell you that. He may come out any time. He's only pretending to drink, — no more drunk than I am," chuckled the cripple.

Guenn turned to go; then suddenly in a low voice: "You were always the best boy that ever lived, Nannic Rodellec, the very most splendid boy, — the best brother that ever a girl had," she began; "but what you have done to-day, well" — She pulled at her apron; her face, pale from weariness, began to flush; bold Guenn stammered, trembled, and found no words.

"You go home," returned Nannic, nodding his head

slowly and looking at her with half-closed eyes. "Girls are fools, awful fools."

Guenn avoided the centre of the noisy common, stealing along in the shadow on its farther side by the water. She stood a moment within sight of the window of an upper room in the Grand Hotel, where the three painters often played whist with a friend. She had seen them enter the inn early this evening. Now a tall shadow appeared on the curtain. She chose to think it was Hamor's, and went home the dark lonely road a little happier for the thought.

All her senses were on the alert. Never had she more clearly heard the grass and herbs growing, and the trees stretching themselves. She saw strange figures flitting about the great menhir, and moving things along the fossés. Crossing herself mechanically, she went her way undaunted and undisturbed, keenly conscious of the supernatural world, but not fearing it for herself. "I never trouble them. Why should they trouble me!" she thought. "And warnings only come from one's own people. One's neighbors' ghosts have enough to do to attend to their own affairs." She reached the dark house, and crept into her bed. Her brain was on fire. Her body seemed to find nothing to support it. Even lying at rest, she felt herself always sinking, as if the bed and the floor and the cottage were falling into fathomless depths. "He told me to eat. If I eat I may be prettier to-morrow." She rose wearily, drank some milk, and ate a bit of crêpe.

When her father and Nannic came home, Redellec saw her lying in apparently gentle sleep; her dark lashes did not quiver as he held his candle up suspiciously. But as soon as he was gone she opened her

eyes and stared into the darkness many hours, not tossing restlessly, but always with the strange sinking feeling which sometimes follows great mental excitement. And always she saw the Nevin crowd, and Hamor's face turned away from her. "If he would look at me just once, I think I could go to sleep. I must sleep, for I must be pretty to-morrow. Why can I not sleep, when the beautiful pictures are safe? He loves them so. He works so hard on them." She grasped the old walnut bedstead to keep herself from sinking.

That night nothing disastrous happened in Plouvenec. About twelve o'clock two men landed softly at a point on the shore not far from Morot's granary, stole through the dark lane behind it, stooped and whispered together, remained but a few moments and went as stealthily as they had come. When the gentle plash of their oars was heard again, a small man, concealed behind an adjacent house, who, whatever his unavoidable surmises must have been, had scrupulously refrained from any endeavor to penetrate their incognito, walked quietly from his ambush and put his foot on a tiny spark creeping slowly along the grass.

"Pretty little Guenn," he said to himself with a smile. "She's a good girl. She ought to be satisfied now. And queer as it is, I'm happier than if I had to arrest old Rodellec and Loïc Nives. Of course it's Nives. Clever little girl, good little girl. She doesn't seem to have much of an opinion of me."

The chief of the police sighed, and went home remembering Guenn's beautiful eyes.

CHAPTER XVI.



IN an old scow, which Guenn kept well in position before the ferry, Hamor was now working mornings. He drew the walls and battlements, the gateway and the rocks; then, in the atelier, made many sketches of Guenn swinging the great oar, and half a dozen ébauches, large and small, before he was satisfied with his conception. His whole guard, as a matter of course, always escorted him, — Jeanne knitting in comfortable unconsciousness of the forces at work near her; Nannic, silent hour after hour, observant, malicious, impenetrable, his pale face wearing its strange air of expectancy. The people who came and went continually across the ferry saw only a painter scowling at his work, a boat moored some distance out, a girl holding it against the current, some children in the stern. The painters were always making pictures of those old gray walls. Surely the Plouvenec church, new and painted white, was prettier, thought the peasants and sailors. But even they would have been satisfied with Hamor's choice had they known that the

most charming thing in the village, Guenn Rodellec herself, with all her strength and grace and beauty and freshness, was to illumine the canvas like sunlight falling warmly upon the cold stone of the fortress.

Hamor — having at last, after his many studies, resolved upon his composition — was working busily, in his floating atelier, painting the frowning old battlements. The vein in the middle of his forehead, tacitly recognized by his vassals as a danger-signal, was invisible. He and the girls grew social, while the spirit of the ancient Breton bard stirred in Nannic's ambitious heart. "If I lived by the Raz, I would row a boat full of souls — souls, souls," he chanted.

"That would be easy work, Nannic. Souls must be light freight."

"Oh no, monsieur," cried Guenn. "Indeed they are not."

"Well, I can't say I know much about them," he answered smiling.

"You are a fisherman," — she began impressively. "You are sleeping in your cottage on the shore of the Raz. At midnight you hear a knock. You rise. You open the door. No one is there. You go down to the water. There is a strange boat. You see no one. But the boat is so loaded it can scarcely float. You row it across. It is so heavy, you can hardly row. Yet in an hour you take the boat farther than you could by yourself in a whole night. You are deathly cold. You hear moans and wails and gnashing of teeth and grinding of bones. And always the boat grows heavier, — heavier with souls."

"With souls — souls — souls," cried Nannic.

"It would be a most impracticable business for me," Hamor remarked gravely. "In the first place, I am a

man who needs considerable sleep. Then your description suggests no motives for pictures. I think I will not at once decide to become a Raz fisherman. Painting has its disadvantages; still, upon the whole" — he was speaking slowly, painting something that required care, — "rowing souls about for pastime —" He forgot what he was about to say, stopped absently, losing himself in his work.

Watching the painter closely, Nannic broke into a free, loud laugh, checked himself suddenly, and assumed his solemn mask.

"Well?" Hamor looked over his shoulder at them. "What were we talking about? Oh yes, souls! Now, Guenn, what made the souls so heavy?"

"Sins."

"Indeed. What do you suppose the very heaviest one had done, the one that weighed a ton, for instance?"

"Betrayed his friend," replied the young girl promptly, a fine scorn curving her lips.

"His friend? Suppose it were a *she*."

"Même chose," said Guenn. "His friend or her friend. It's all the same. It's the worst sin."

"What is the next worst?"

"For a girl? To be fiancée three times without marrying."

Hamor laughed heartily.

"If you are a girl, and are fiancée three times without marrying, you will burn in hell," Guenn remarked with immovable conviction.

"Is that true?"

"Oh, there's nothing truer than that," she answered emphatically.

"It seems an altogether proper punishment," he said

soberly, "but I think it is not generally anticipated in my country. I don't think our girls know it."

"They'd better!" Guenn said bluntly. "You'd better tell them."

"I will," returned Hamor gravely; "I will certainly mention it."

He was painting successfully. This weather suited him. Soon he could have Guenn pose at the islands. He whistled cheerfully. It was amusing, working in an old scow, and listening to her naïve theories of sin and retribution. The girl had a fair amount of rough honesty in her composition, — good clean ideas which any girl might be proud of. How sensibly she was behaving too; how helpful she was. He liked her very much at this moment, and amiably desired to give her a pleasure.

"Guenn," he said kindly, "when you are fiancée, and I am sure that will be but once, I will give you a beautiful present."

"Oh!" exclaimed little Jeanne rapturously. Guenn leaned on her oar, and looked at him.

"And you too, Jeanne," added Hamor.

"Oh!" said Jeanne again.

"But you must tell me what you want, of course, and who the lucky gars is."

"Of course," assented Jeanne.

"And whether you would like something for your house or something to wear, — your wedding gown for instance?"

"Guenn, would you like monsieur to give you your wedding gown?" demanded Jeanne, nudging her friend with an eager elbow.

"There's time enough, monsieur," muttered Guenn. With the effort to conceal her pain, her face grew sullen.

"Curious temper," thought Hamor, "unaccountable! One would suppose she would be rather more gracious under the circumstances."

"Oh well, arrange it to suit yourselves," he said carelessly. "When the happy time comes, write me a letter, and I'll send you anything, to the half of my kingdom."

"Jeanne will have her gars and her wedding gown," Nannic began solemnly, "but Guenn wears the mark of Saint Divy."

"Who in the world is he, and what is his mark?"

"Saint Divy, the son of Saint Nonne;" and Nannic pointed with a crooked finger to a blue line between the eyebrows, visible on his own face as on his sister's. "Early death, early death," he said in his singing voice.

Strong as were Guenn's fatalism and superstition, she always felt a curious objection to the popular interpretation of this little blue line. Her great vitality seemed to protest against being summarily reduced to nothingness by such a trifle. "What is young? What is old?" she said with a shrug, flushing a little and looking somewhat defiant. "There is old Josèphe. She has the blue line too."

"But she prayed. Saint Divy will come to your aid if you pray enough," Jeanne explained. "Nannic, if you would sing less and pray more," she added in her sensible fashion, "you could arrange things very nicely with Saint Divy. He is not at all disobliging. You know you have more time to pray than Guenn; one cannot expect Guenn to pray much."

"Early death, early death," persisted the boy, rolling up his eyes.

"Come, come, Nannic," said Hamor, "don't be so

gloomy. You'll give us all the blue-devils, with your blue-Divy croakings. I must say, I don't think Divy is a pious name for a saint. But if he painted those violet tones round Guenn's eyes, he was a man of taste, and I respect him. And we'll all pray to him as hard as we can, so that he will leave us Guenn and her beautiful eyes many a long year. What should we all do, indeed, without Guenn? What would the picture do?" he said in the kindest voice, with an affectionate glance at her.

A moment before, she felt the strange pain and hopelessness which she had never known until monsieur had come into her life, and which a smiling word of his, in his happiest mood, could so suddenly and cruelly conjure up. Sweethearts and wedding gowns! Well, why should he not speak of them? Yet his idle, kindly talk cut her to the heart. The thought of any closer relationship than that in which she now served and worshipped him had never entered, could by no possibility enter, her mind. But living in him and for him, with all the passionate force of her nature, she was equally incapable of grasping the idea of a life where he was not. She knew as a remote matter of fact, that he was going away. She did not actually realize that he was going, — except now and then for one cruel moment, as now, when he had spoken of the wedding gown.

Not alone his light suggestion of separation and absence caused that sickening despair to over-master her, but a vague yet painful consciousness of the gulf between them, over which he smiled at her, and gayly flung his gifts and pleasant words. Fierce jealousy of the unknown future, and the influences which would draw him from her; unconscious rebellion against

the incongruity of the situation ; a perfectly womanly longing to be more to him, to do more for him, met always by his disappointing elusiveness which might grieve even a woman of his own class, — such emotions swept through her heart with stormy violence. With a word he could rouse the tempest. With a word he could still it. She never knew why she was miserable or happy : she could not have explained why she resented his careless bestowal of her, in fancy, upon another man, — his marrying her off and gayly decking her with bridal finery. She only knew the pain was gone. Our picture ! How she loved it. She smiled and colored brilliantly under Hamor's glance, moved the oar gently to and fro, and looked at the canvas sweetly, as a young mother looks at her little child — protecting, tender, with rapt wonder and infinite devotion.

“It's worth while irritating her a little, if only to see how beautiful she is when she softens again,” Hamor reflected. “The fact is, I am too apt to forget that freak of hers. She is obstinate when I speak of going away. She likes to pretend I am going to stay forever. Well, if she chooses to be an ostrich, and bury her head in the sand, I can't help it. All women do it.” He whistled softly, and looked critically at his work. Nannie was crooning something about a tall man, dark, thin and pale, walking through a bog and followed by a black dog. Hamor discovered finally that he was listening to a curious Breton version of the story of Abelard and Héloïse, — the unfortunate Héloïse figuring as a magician or witch, making strange compacts with the powers of nature like an ancient Druidess, and assuming at will the form of a black dog, a crow, a dragon, or a firefly. When the two weird companions appeared, a storm followed.

"They did raise rather a storm," said Hamor.

"They were sweethearts," Nannic suddenly announced, deigning to assume an unmythic tone.

"He must rest now and then, the little farceur," Hamor reflected, "it's amusing to see him slip out of his rôle."

"I would like to be a sweetheart if I could change myself into a black dog. I must learn that," Nannic added gravely.

"Yes, you must," rejoined Hamor.

"I would like to be a sweetheart like Mr. Staunton's," said Jeanne.

"Does that mean you would like to be Mr. Staunton's sweetheart?" Hamor asked, smiling.

"Mon dieu — no," cried Jeanne, abashed.

"Mr. Staunton is not a bad fellow," Guenn remarked gravely.

"Thanks. I will tell him you think so."

"I have often told him myself," Guenn replied carelessly. "I have told him I like him a little, not much indeed, and that I don't like Monsieur Douglas at all."

"Why?"

"I don't know, but I don't like him. It is easy to know whom you like; it is not easy to know why."

"But Douglas is kind to you, Guenn."

"I know it. But I don't like him. One doesn't like people because they are kind, or dislike them because they are unkind."

"Some do."

"I don't."

"I am sure Jeanne does, for instance." Hamor smiled at the gentle little face, undisturbed by any strong feeling.

"Yes, monsieur. I always like people who are kind," she answered demurely.

"And if I don't like them," Guenn began in her emotional, magnetic way, her head erect, her eyes glowing, "they may rain louis d'or on me, or weep and beg and crawl at my feet; they may smile like God's angels, sail round the whole great world to please me, reach up to heaven and give me a shining star, and be kind — oh, kind as the kindest, — and still I don't like them, if I don't!"

"And if you do, Guenn?" Hamor said gently, turning and looking over his shoulder, straight into her eyes.

"And if I do," — her voice, before arrogant and audacious, fell to a low passionate tone, — "and if I do — they may hurt me, hate me, beat me, starve me, kill me — and still I like them, if I do!"

"Whom do you like in that way, Guenn?" asked the painter. He meant no harm in obeying the caprice of the moment. Where so much feeling was freely professed, what man would resist playing with it?

Guenn trembled. His eyes were seeking hers. His words were sweet to her soul. The fascination of his great gentleness was irresistible, and when he spoke so tenderly, she could have fallen and covered his feet with kisses. But nearer her, peering up into her face, with a searching, largely intelligent, commanding look, was the pale, wizened humpback. To him too her great heart responded with unspeakable affection. A maidenly instinct caused her, a beautiful color wavering in her cheeks, to turn slightly from the painter. Stretching out her hand towards her brother, she regarded Hamor with a certain appealing and pathetic dignity. "My Nannic," she answered softly.

This was not what Hamor had expected, but he admired her very much.

"Girls are fools," remarked Nannic curtly, "awful fools."

Guenn merely smiled in response.

"When is Monsieur Staunton going to marry his sweetheart?" began Jeanne's tranquil voice, her thoughts fixed upon practical things.

"Soon, I believe," Hamor replied; "next month."

"And she paints pictures too, does n't she?"

"Yes."

"And will they both paint pictures after they are married?" inquired Jeanne, laughing, apparently finding something delightfully droll in the idea.

"Yes."

"Then who will cook and take care of the babies?"

Hamor laughed. "Jeanne, that's a question that puzzles many a wiser head than yours. I presume the one that paints the less will have to take care of the babies. But that would be a pity, confound them! for mademoiselle is a stronger artist than most of the men down here. If they'd asked my advice," he went on with a quizzical air, more to himself than to his hearers, "I should have first said *don't*, and then, *don't* — again *don't*, and always, *don't*."

"Why, monsieur?" Guenn asked abruptly, facing him with a look of eager inquiry.

"Because, my dear Mademoiselle Rodellec," — stepping as far back in the boat as was possible and scrutinizing his picture, — "one of the few profoundly solid and immovable opinions which I possess is that a painter ought not to marry anybody. As for marrying another painter — great heavens! — it is madness. But I know one man who will keep out of that, whatever other snare he may fall into, and his name is Everett Hamor — at your service, mesdames et

monsieur," with a grand swooping bow all over the boat.

Jeanne and Nannic laughed heartily. This bow was a kind of wit which they appreciated. Guenn swung the great oar as if it were light as a feather. She did not feel its weight. Her slight waist leaned warmly on it, moved sympathetically with it — to the right, to the left, as it made innumerable ripples in its broad sweep. Her radiant face looked across to the other shores and above the hills all smoky blue, and far into towering gray cloud-masses, with an indefinite promise of happiness in their golden edges, and a pale-rose sea of hopefulness closing in all around.

"Ah, mon dieu, que la vie est amè-re!"

she sang, joyful as a bobolink in the springtime.

"Jeanne," turning suddenly upon the affectionate but phlegmatic little knitter, "sometimes you are as stupid as Victoria. Do stop knitting. Do wake up." Brilliant, rosy, impetuous, exacting, "Do be nice," she said to her placid and harmless friend.

"Non, le roi Arthur n'est pas mort!" Nannic was now chanting. "King Arthur is not dead. He will return."

Guenn looked as if she thought the fair king had returned, bringing honor, joy, and peace to the land, — most of all to her, his chosen handmaid.





CHAPTER XVII.

“**Y**OU see it is fairly well along, monsieur le curé,” Hamor said cheerfully.

“I see, monsieur.”

“But at this stage of its progress I decidedly need Guenn.”

“You need Guenn,” repeated the priest mechanically.

“Now there’s some sense in posing over here,” remarked the young girl with a bright laugh. “I always felt like a fool, trying to row in monsieur’s atelier. Here, thank heaven, one knows what one is about.” She looked smilingly from her boat at the two young men on the rocks, — Hamor intently studying his canvas, Thymert, grave and dark, standing near him with folded arms.

"Yes, I must change that," Hamor muttered, stepping backwards, and looking through his hand. "Posez, Guenn, throw yourself more — Ah! that's it. Now, isn't she exquisite?" with a burst of enthusiasm to the curé. "They may talk till they are black in the face," he said, "but this freedom and freshness she can only have when she is actually rowing, instead of pretending to row. Two days here are worth more to me than months of cobbling in the atelier. She is already sketched in, as well as I could sketch her there. But you will soon see the difference, monsieur le curé, all the difference in the world," — he was painting steadily — "the difference between truth and life, and what we call *chic*. Can I feel the pressure of the water against her oar in the atelier? Can she? Can I paint it? No! a thousand times, no. Well then."

"No doubt, no doubt," replied the priest absently.

"You can be sure enough that I feel the current," Guenn called out merrily. "Oh, how it pulls! But I'm good for it, and that's a mercy."

"If the winds don't finally sweep us all away, that will be another mercy;" and Hamor pulled down his *béret* firmly. "Your islands always seem to resent the presence of strangers. If one were not able to fall back upon your hospitality, monsieur le curé, one would be in a bad way out here, left to the fury of the elements," — with a civil smile at his host.

"What are you going to do with that picture when it's finished, monsieur?" Thymert demanded with brusque irrelevance.

"Why, it's for the Salon. Have you forgotten?" cried Guenn.

"Yes, it's for the Salon, monsieur le curé."

"There are a great many people at the Salon?" asked the priest slowly, looking at Hamor.

"Millions," Guenn hastened to say, — "ladies with dresses bunched-up behind, gentlemen with little glass windows in one eye — all walking up and down in rooms miles and miles long, all looking at the picture, all clasping their hands and saying: 'Mon dieu, what a beautiful picture this picture of Monsieur Hamor's is!'"

Hamor smiled with indulgence for the flattering exaggeration. Then, "Monsieur le curé," he said amiably, "now you will observe, to a certain extent, what I was trying to explain. Notice the effect of the wind. It increases the action incalculably. I did not have it before. See the water—Guenn's skirt blown straight back against the knees. Charming, charming!"

"And after the Salon, monsieur?" continued the priest with singular insistence.

"Oh," — Hamor was not a little surprised at Thymert's complete want of interest in his explanation, but went on with frank good-humor — "after the Salon? Why I hope to sell it, of course," laughing, and looking at the grave and dark face with happy confidence. "Shall I confess? Well, I hope somebody will be fool enough to pay ten thousand francs for it. But I would take five thousand; and I beg you not to think me mean-spirited if, in case I am as hard up in the spring as I expect to be, and as it is in fact my habit to become about that time, I might be induced to take three thousand, and say, 'Thank you kindly, sir,' to boot!"

Guenn threw back her head and laughed heartily. She had heard all this before, but she always found it amusing. Thymert did not seem to discover the amus-

ing element in it. He wore a perplexed look, implying fruitless mental search. His sad eyes wandered hopelessly over his nine barren islands—rich in courage, duty, and devotion, but ah, so poor in gold! He came nearer the canvas. Guenn stood there,—surely, in flesh and blood,—charming, beautiful, and daring. He started.

“It is the few last touches that have done it,” Hamor said pleasantly. “Before, she was a milliner’s doll. Now she is Guenn, the inimitable Guenn.”

Managing her boat with the strength of a man, yet exquisitely girlish and graceful,—rude and wild, yet honest, fearless, and good,—the young girl on the canvas was looking frankly into the priest’s eyes. He could almost see the rise and fall of the little red kerchief, the warm color coming and going in her cheeks, and—although the face was earnest, such was the suggestion of superabundant youth and vitality conveyed by Hamor’s truthful touch,—almost the mischievous smiles playing about her lovely mouth. He could almost hear her wild sweet laughter, the sweetest and most innocent in the whole world. All the pretty curves of the lips were there, curves that always reminded Thymert of her babyhood. The short, decided nose was exactly Guenn’s; the dark blue eyes, with their perfect simplicity, their faithfulness and boldness, were gazing directly into his; and there she stood, swinging the enormous oar in the white-capped waves, so fearless and strong, so beautiful—poor little Guenn! and all the men and women at the Salon would stare at her, and chatter about her as the strangers did at breakfast that day; and she would look at them, and not be troubled or afraid. When was Guenn Rodellec afraid? But oh, the pity of it—the pity and the

shame! Three thousand francs? "Louis Morot has it and to spare," whispered a tempting voice in his heart. "Get thee behind me, Satan," replied his conscience. "I take help for my poor people, never for myself. This is for myself. God knows, only for myself. It is the wish of my own heart; yet I promised Barba to take care of the children."

"We painters are a singularly misunderstood body of men," Hamor remarked genially, reflecting that if the priest, as was evident, had small interest in the sentiment or the technique of a picture, he might at least care to listen to some practical considerations. "Now I ask you how many people who will see this painting will realize that it represents six months' honest labor, that I had to live in the mean time and pay my debts, and that even the canvas does not grow on a bush, inviting every passer-by to pluck it. After all, a picture is not a dream. It is daily bread."

"It is his daily bread," thought the priest with a hot flash in his dark eyes, "yet I wish I could chop it to pieces, and throw it into the sea. It would hurt me to destroy it, because it is Guenn. I would turn away my head, so as not to see myself cut the lovely face; but rather than have the little girl stared at and talked about by that Paris world, and she all the time looking out of her honest eyes without a thought of harm —"

"People seem to imagine," Hamor continued with his harmless and pleasing frankness, "that a picture comes springing into existence in answer to the painter's heaven-born inspiration and mandate. Now it does nothing of the kind. How many times do you think Guenn has posed for this one figure? Well, I have been sketching her surreptitiously ever since I came to Plouvenec. Through all the little studies

I have made of her, this has been continually in my mind. We have done weeks of work in the atelier for it — preparation, you know. I have nearly a dozen charcoal-sketches, and almost as many ébauches; and I must say Guenn's patient devotion to the cause has been marvellous," he added, smiling kindly at her. "Rest a moment, Guenn. Come and see yourself now."

"Well, I never did care so much for anything that is n't alive," she exclaimed warmly, flushing prettily under his praise, sculling towards them, jumping lightly on the rocks and stretching her arms above her head, before she threw herself carelessly on the sand behind Hamor.

The priest looked down upon her with pained surprise. "You care so much for it — so much?"

"Oh, I love it so — as if it were a living, breathing thing, I tell you. It is monsieur's best picture. I am helping him make it. No one else could help him as much as I do."

Thymert turned abruptly.

"Take care, monsieur le curé! Ah," she cried reproachfully, "your soutane has brushed against it where it was still wet."

"It's of absolutely no importance," said Hamor as the priest apologized. "Guenn is a dragon where this particular canvas is concerned. She thinks that I take liberties with it. I am inclined to believe she is proud to travel off to Paris and show them how a little Bretonne can scull. Eh, Guenn?"

"No, monsieur," she said softly, smiling with much gentleness and drooping her long lashes. It seemed to the priest that there had been more than once of late a certain sadness in her smile, a look he had never be-

fore seen in her careless happy face. It made his heart ache strangely. It gave him a sudden feeling of rage. But in an instant she was laughing in unrestrained mirth, like her free, glad self, and looking up from her resting-place in the sand, very mischievous, and perfectly at ease with both men. "Those people," she said with pretty contempt, "those people with the bunch-ups and the little windows on their eyes, now what do they know about sculling?"

"Some of them know a little," Hamor answered. "Some are less heathen than others. Don't be severe upon them, Guenn."

"Well, they won't know that I am the only girl in Plouvenec that can handle that big oar," she announced arrogantly.

Hamor always found her boastfulness delicious.

"If not quite that," he said meekly, "I shall at least try to make it clear that the oar is very large and that you are very small, and that nobody could possibly handle it better."

"Good," said Guenn, nodding and smiling. The curé stood looking at the painting, the young girl, the busy artist, the sea. He was restless and awkward, out of place. No one could be more at home than Guenn. It was her special gift and grace always to seem to belong where she found herself. Lying on a mossy bank, curled up knitting on the rocks, flying through the chemins creux, with her hands placed aggressively on her hips, mocking Mother Nives at the river, or as now, reclining easily in a hollow in the sands, — it would have been difficult to suggest an attitude more in harmony with her surroundings.

"I was about to say, monsieur le curé," Hamor began with amiable loquacity, "that people are continually

wandering in the dark, not only in a hopeless attempt to find our pictures, but ourselves. They don't understand painters, you know," he remarked with a charmingly confidential and explanatory smile.

"Ah!" said Thymert, fixing his eyes upon Guenn, and running his hand nervously through his hair.

"I assure you, no," — Hamor's manner grew imperceptibly didactic, but the smile which he gave the dark-robed, dark-faced man beside him was genial and kind, — "upon my word. Now how do they represent us? As suffering, isolated geniuses, towering above our fellow-creatures; as rascals and profligates; as something between a schoolgirl's hero and a man-milliner. But do you find in general any conception, in books or in life, of us as we for the most part are, — as you have seen us down here, for instance, — men, don't you know, actual men, working hard, with a clearly defined object, — men like other men, monsieur le curé, as earnest and simple as your fishermen; where do you find us, I ask you?"

Guenn had raised herself on one elbow, and with parted lips and an entranced expression was listening to Hamor's harangue, — to its music rather than to its substance.

"I am sure I don't know, monsieur," answered the sailor-priest's deep bass, somewhat roughly.

"One becomes disgusted, I may well say nauseated," continued Hamor, in smiling obliviousness of the curé's mood, intent upon the picture, yet sailing along agreeably on his broad stream of fluent talk, "with the world's idea of the artist, be he a Pariah through want of principle, or a sublimated, etherealized shadow of a man. The world does not understand the artist-temperament, yet it is continually harping upon it.

It is supposed to lead to much harm. Does it ever occur to the croakers to consider that the artist does positive good to the world? whereas his faults and frailties are by no means his alone, but are shared by other men who do no good at all. Now if you tell me that Goethe was—" He stepped back, scowled a little at his work, half closing his eyes, and forgot to resume his oration. "Posez, Guenn."

With a light bound the girl sprang down the rocks.

"Row her out a few strokes."

She obeyed.

"Advance the right leg a little more. Waist well back."

Thymert with great strides was already ascending the bank. On his face was a dark flush, as if caused by violent bodily exertion.

"Are you going, monsieur le curé?" Hamor called in a friendly tone. "He does not hear, he is absorbed in his own thoughts. What do our petty conventionalities matter, after all?" he thought admiringly. "This man is above them."

Thymert was standing among the coarse grass and crosses, but for once he had no thought of his drowned sailors. His eyes were full of rage; his strong hands were clenched. His head was erect and turned nearly profile to the painter. The wind stirred the long hair on his shoulders. "O my God!" moaned the young priest.

"I can't resist that," Hamor said to himself; "It's that superb pose. Wait, Guenn, rest;" and the strong man in his pain was ably transferred to the sketch-book.

"Monsieur le curé," called the painter suddenly, in a laughing, deprecating voice, "what would you say if

I should be bold enough to ask you to pose for me? Since I'm here on the spot, it would not seem presuming, would it? You feel, I hope, that it is quite the natural thing for me to do?" His admiration for the curé was profound, and the modesty and somewhat youthful hesitation of his manner were sincere exponents of his desire in no way to wound Thymert's pride.

Hamor — smiling, waiting for his answer — did not look up from his work. The priest threw back his noble head, gazed up to the zenith, then closed his eyes an instant. The anger passed from his face, and something sombre settled there, — not resignation alone, not hopelessness, but perhaps both, — with a dreary and desolate courage.

"Monsieur le curé, why don't you answer Monsieur Hamor?" Guenn called with evident discontent.

"Pray don't disturb him," Hamor said quickly, in a low tone; "be more considerate. A man like Thymert has much to think of."

"Well, he might answer a civil question," she persisted, making a perverse little moue; "he is n't deaf. And when you speak, monsieur," she said, with charming naiveté, "it is so easy to hear. It is a voice one must hear," she repeated emphatically. "Why, one hears it, when all the sailors on the common are shouting themselves hoarse."

But Thymert had at least heard the summons of her young voice, that always reminded him of crystal-clear water with little ripples in it, and was obeying.

"Pardon, monsieur; I was occupied with my own thoughts." He took off his hat and passed his hand across his brow abruptly. Hamor politely waited.

"He wants you to pose, you know." Guenn spoke

with much impatience, failing to recognize the smallest reason for delay.

"I should consider it a great honor and privilege to be allowed to paint you, monsieur le curé," Hamor said very courteously; then, with a flash of enthusiasm lighting his whole face: "I have been hoping, waiting, — longing for the opportunity ever since I saw you that first night; I have indeed."

"Well?" demanded Guenn, surprised and somewhat irritated.

"I don't think I am exactly the kind of person one paints," said the priest slowly. He looked down with irony upon his worn soutane, wondering whether it were possible that he too had what the men at breakfast that day had called *lines*. Moreover, he felt a horror of the whole paraphernalia of this amiable, irreproachable young man, against whom he could not in words make one reasonable complaint. A moment before, he was conscious of hating the stranger. He had had a furious desire to throw him and his belongings off the rocks. "God forgive me if there be murder in my soul!" he had prayed in the little graveyard. As for being imprisoned on this man's canvas, it would be better to be caged outright, never again take one free step, never again feel the sunlight on one's cheek, the sea-winds lifting one's hair!

"I can hardly explain to you what an unusually important study I find you," Hamor said seriously.

The priest stared at him with utter want of comprehension and sympathy; then answered coldly: "I should not like it, — I have not the patience."

"Oh!" exclaimed Guenn indignantly.

Both men looked at her. She had forgotten to pose, was frowning at the curé and flushing with vexation.

"But it is unkind, monsieur le recteur!" she began vehemently. "It is such a little thing to do. Bah, it does not hurt, and monsieur wishes it. It is not like you to refuse."

Thymert looked at her without speaking. She softened under his sad gaze.

"Ah, monsieur le curé, you will do it if I beg? Monsieur would be so pleased; monsieur only cares to paint you and me." She was pleading very sweetly now. "Monsieur wishes it so very much."

"Don't insist, Guenn. Monsieur le curé must decide for himself," Hamor interposed, gently. "Of course, if it would not be agreeable, there is nothing more to be said."

But Guenn went on in her rapid, eager way: "And while monsieur is here it would be so simple. It would scarcely disturb you at all. And monsieur is kind enough to make the beautiful picture for the chapel, and you see how much he cares to paint you. And why should you not, indeed, if he wishes it? He has me. Why may he not have you? He only wants us two. Surely, surely you will consent."

"Guenn, Guenn!" Hamor interrupted her with a pleasant laugh.

"He only wants us two," moved the curé strangely.

"He is going to say yes," cried Guenn, smiling and clasping her hands eagerly.

Thymert stepped nearer the picture. "If you would put me in that boat," he suggested, with the simplicity of a child. Yes, it would surely be more fitting. How wrong of him not to have thought of it before! If a Breton, and one of her own race too, should go off with the little girl to Paris, — then, if the strange men and women did stare curiously at her lovely, glowing face,

and watch her swing the heavy oar, and make their bold and hateful comments, — at least she would not stand there unprotected and alone before them all.

“We will see,” said Hamor, restraining a smile. “I can tell better later, after I have made a study of you. Indeed, I feel immensely grateful to you, and I really shall not trouble you much; I could n’t presume, *monsieur le curé*. A short sitting, two or three days, will give me all that is necessary for what I have in my mind. To speak plainly, I have lately been thinking of you more especially as John the Baptist. There are several others, indeed” — he contemplated the dark and powerful man with his appreciative artist vision, — “yet ‘the voice of one crying in the wilderness’ — hm — hm” — His words died away in an unintelligible murmur, while his delighted eyes feasted on the curé’s face and form, and his fancy revelled in myriads of compositions.

Thymert but half heard him. He loathed the whole scheme. But if the painter, as Guenn said, had her, he might have him. Guenn wished it. That was reason enough.

“Was John the Baptist like us Bretons?” asked the young girl curiously.

“He had some Breton traits,” replied the curé dryly; at which Hamor laughed, and Thymert himself faintly smiled. It gave him un hoped-for comfort, to hear the familiar “us Bretons” from Guenn’s lips again. The tall easel, planted aggressively there on his *free* island, seemed for the moment less obnoxious.

“Now you are smiling, now you are your kind self,” Guenn exclaimed audaciously. “Now I am glad. Of course you will do as *monsieur* wishes.”

“I must go over to the Cigogne,” said the priest abruptly. “Old Jean is worse.”

"You will find us still at it when you come back," Hamor answered brightly.

"Brigitte is there, if you want anything," added the priest.

"Monsieur le curé," — Guenn looked at him as he stepped into his own boat; something in his face disturbed her, — "was I cross? I am sorry," she said, with not much penitence, but with a very charming little laugh, and kind, honest eyes.

"No, you were not cross; you were only troubled."

"Well, I hurt you," she persisted. "You looked so," — setting her lips firmly, in merry imitation of the priest.

"You could not hurt me, child," he exclaimed with noble warmth. "You could never hurt me, Guenn; you could not if you should try." He rowed past her, with a smile of tenderest indulgence greeting her beneath his mournful eyes.

"Well, you are good," she retorted carelessly, watching Hamor closely and waiting for his signal; "you are an angel."

"Posez, Guenn!" said the painter.



CHAPTER XVIII.



GUENN was thoroughly happy. This last experience was full of special attractiveness. To sail over to the Lannions every morning was in itself a delight to the girl, but there was something glorious in being taken over by Meurice as monsieur's indispensable model. She would have liked to stay nights, as monsieur did, instead of being sent home every evening; but madame of the Voyageurs, who so rarely interfered in other people's affairs, simply did interfere on this occasion, and neither she nor anybody else need say the contrary, Guenn reflected, with a frown. It was all arranged: she was to stay four days, and old Brigitte could look after her, monsieur said; although this seemed to Guenn a curious idea, as she felt herself much more capable of looking after old Brigitte. It was a pity Nannic would not and Jeanne could not go. Monsieur had not written to Thymert, but had merely said one day, in his bright, sudden way, that they would sail over the next morning, and trust to luck; indeed there was scarcely a chance of luck's

being against them. Guenn had come late to the Voyageurs, to tell monsieur that she had seen Meurice and arranged everything; it was then that madame herself rose up and positively interfered, insisting that Guenn was to be brought back to Plouvenec every evening.

"But will it not be almost impossible for her to come over early enough mornings, madame?" suggested Hamor doubtfully. "That is all that is important. The days are short; I must have the morning light."

"Oh no! not impossible," Guenn cried eagerly, "but only stupid, since you prefer me to stay there," — with a resentful glance at madame.

"It is cold at the Lannions," madame said quickly.

"As if I care!"

"There are other things that are important."

"Bah!" said Guenn.

"It is altogether inconvenient," persisted madame;

"I am sure Monsieur Hamor agrees with me."

After five minutes' private and very amicable conversation Monsieur Hamor did agree with her. "Of course I want her as early as I can paint."

"She shall be punctual, monsieur."

"You see, the curé being there, and old Brigitte, and — and as it is Guenn Rodellec; and as I am — I — well, upon my word, madame, I did not trouble my head about the proprieties," he acknowledged with a laugh.

"No doubt, no doubt, monsieur," suavely, "but it is better that Meurice take her home early in the evening. She will enjoy that; our girls like to sail, and they sail less than one would expect. It is curious, is it not, how little our girls on the coast sail?"

Hamor admitted that it was very curious indeed; and

Guenn, much against her will, was obliged to submit to the inevitable. But afterwards she did not regret madame's interference.

This voyage of honor and triumph stimulated her pride. He was waiting for her: she was necessary to him. Sailing to him in state was quite different from hurrying through the familiar Plouvenec streets, and waiting under the arch until monsieur came along with his keys to open the studio. She had never heard of Cleopatra going to meet Mark Antony, of royal barge wreathed with garlands and shaded by silken awnings held aloft by rosy cupids; but her radiant loveliness, her exultation, was equal to that of any woman who ever lived and loved; and as she plunged through the white-capped waves to him, with joy in her eyes and laughter on her lips, the rough winds crimsoning her cheeks, she queened it with pretty tyranny over Meurice and his crew, captivating them completely with her beauty and innocent lawlessness, until every man of them was in honest subjection to this imperious little being, with her sweet voice and fearless eyes. In the freshness of the mornings they left her, buoyant and rosy, on the outer rocks of the Lannions, where Hamor and the priest came to help her ashore. How proudly her heart beat as she saw the two tall figures, the painter in his browns, the priest in his old soutane, waiting to receive her! In the early winter twilight they brought her again to the boat, that called for her, returning from the day's fishing. Then she would quickly curl herself up on a coil of rope, and the sailors thought she was tired or asleep, and Meurice always covered the quiet little figure with a blanket, — even, when it grew cold, with his own coat; and the rough men tried to wake her softly when the boat ran up to the Plouvenec landing. But

she was not asleep. Living over in memory every moment of the day, — not dreamily, yet jealously excluding, in her serious passion, all other sights and sounds; counting her golden treasure of words and glances; asking herself pitilessly if she had given her best strength to the work which he required of her, — if the great picture could be satisfied with her this day; her imagination richly painting the happy morrow, — she sailed back under the stars to Plouvenec. And the love of the rough little girl, lying carelessly in the old fishing-smack among rude men, was a lofty love, breathing self-sacrifice, courage, and high sentiment, — leading her to shape her life bravely day by day, not for the reward of love's softness and endearments, but struggling against the uncomprehended longing of her heart. Working for a cause, living for an idea, she offered her soul in pure homage before Hamor and his aims.

So the days went by, six days instead of four, and every evening she was transformed into a silent little being, whom they made comfortable as best they could, and sheltered from the winds with awkward tenderness. When the seventh morning came, and no little figure was before them on the wharf, — no rosy eager face looked frankly at them, no girl's voice in sweet impatience ordered them about, found fault with their slowness, ridiculed their clumsiness, then smiled and graciously forgave them, — they were sorry, and wished the people at the Lannions had needed Guenn Rodellec longer.

It was a week of most satisfactory weather, and results to Hamor, — not too sunny, not too cold, replete with novelty and charm. Guenn regained in full force the qualities which now and then seemed to be fading, why it was impossible for him to say, under the indis-

putably improving influences of the atelier life. A little fierce, a little wild she should be, for his purposes. At the same time, a certain docility among the models was certainly agreeable. Guenn had been obedient, sweet-tempered, helpful as possible, since he had had the tact to interest her in the picture, and more spirited as a model than any other mortal could hope to be. Still, she was a peculiar being, and must be measured only with herself. A certain something he missed now and then. Was it freshness, grace, daring? She surely had enough, he reflected. Still, before, in her state of utter lawlessness, she had had a fascinating and delicious *too-much* of these qualities. Great then was his joy and thankfulness, to see her arriving morning after morning at the Lannions in the perfect condition he desired, rosy, buoyant, free, and fearless, strongly inclined to domineer, and with the bewitching excess of wild animal spirits, of which he disapproved in his daily intercourse with her, but which immeasurably enhanced her picturesqueness and artistic worth. "It is like the perfume of a flower, the bloom of a peach. I must make it mine while I can." He experienced a deep sense of gratitude to the powers that controlled his destiny, that they had, at precisely this time, produced in Guenn Rodellec's lovely little person all the effects he most needed to complete his important picture.

"I am a singularly fortunate man," he said one evening to the priest. "I almost always have what I wish. It is no merit of course, but it is a fact nevertheless. I am lucky. To be sure, my desires are not very extravagant," he added, laughing pleasantly. "Beyond my painting, I have none. Now the first night I was in Plouvenec I saw you and Guenn, each in a singularly vivid, striking way. I resolved to paint

you. I have painted you. Does n't it seem as if I were lucky beyond my deserts?"

To this, as to many cheerful statements on the part of his guest, Thymert listened without replying, merely turning his dark eyes in a slow questioning way upon the animated face opposite him.

"Are you trying to penetrate the recesses of my nature?" Hamor asked him. "Because believe me, monsieur le curé, I have no recesses. No man was ever so shallow as I."

Thymert made a deprecating gesture and said simply: "Pardon, monsieur, I sometimes lose myself in my thoughts. It is a bad habit."

Hamor found him as a companion more gloomy and fitful than he had anticipated. Remembering the large warmth of the priest's manner that pleasant morning at breakfast, his graciousness and even his gayety, the gravity of his bearing in these latter days impressed the painter singularly. Still he found it in strict harmony with the desolate islands and the melancholy sound of the eternal surges. Beautiful as was Thymert's smile, flashing over the dark and ardent face, there was more grandeur in his sombre earnestness. He was emphatically a heroic figure, and as such Hamor painted him with fine selection; remaining on the Loch two days after he had dispensed with Guenn's services there, in order to do as much with the curé in so short a time as the curé's evident impatience would permit. The painter felt too considerate and too courteous to insist upon staying long enough to make a finished picture; but, thanks to Guenn's intercession, he could at least provide himself with a couple of valuable studies of this rare type.

Nights, after Guenn was gone, the simple kindness

of the priest's nature asserted itself. The two young men would often chat late, — the painter, it is true, being the chief speaker, the priest listening with interest. In talking with this man, whose own life knew unnumbered hardships and perils, Hamor related his rough Western experiences amiably and modestly. There was much in them which Thymert cared to hear. He would often be roused to expressions of keen sympathy, enthusiasm, admiration. Then, quieting, the slow inscrutable inquiry would creep into his eyes, and he would become moody and restless. Sometimes he would display an extraordinary interest in painting, asking the most minute questions, as if striving to reach the soul of the matter. At other times, when Hamor was idly chatting, he would rise abruptly, fling his hair back with impatience, and — muttering a half-apology, or none at all — would rush out of the dimly lighted room in the corner of the chapel, and pace his island in uncontrollable agitation.

The chapel on the Loch never turned away a guest, living or dead ; but its priest's generous heart was sorely tortured by this constant intercourse with the amiable painter, whom he sought in vain to comprehend. Thymert felt that his soul was adrift, rudderless, in a stormy sea, under black heavens. He understood neither himself nor his surroundings. He could specify no danger, no wrong ; yet the nameless forebodings which had haunted him for months grew each day more intense. He trembled for little Guenn, who was nevertheless happy and safe. He dreaded and feared the painter, he hated him at times ; yet who was so sunny and harmless as Monsieur Hamor ? Already every man on the islands swore by him, and he was as glad to do a fellow-creature a kindness as Louis Morot himself. Nothing was too rough for him, nothing daunted him. He

was a brave, simple gars, with his heart in the right place, and the making of a gallant sailor. The curé's simple sense of justice forced him again and again to this conclusion. Yet when the painter put up that easel, with its hideous spider-legs, Thymert shuddered as if he saw some cruel, blood-sucking animal reaching after its prey, and turned away with a suffocating flood of hot and helpless resentment surging in his heart, a mighty savage impulse to destroy and kill. His instincts warned him, and made him wretched; but his perplexed and contradictory reasonings were powerless to explain to him his fears. To his simple and positive mind, this, in itself, was misery.

But whether he sat silent and sad in his study, or gazed with uncomplaining, painful effort into Hamor's unreachable soul, or drew himself up superbly in his threadbare soutane and rushed out into the night, — whether he was solicitous in his hospitality, or gave short answers, and impatient movements, — Hamor was always his enthusiastic and indefatigable admirer. The priest could not swing his powerful shoulders, but Hamor rejoiced and congratulated himself. Thymert's dark figure on the rocks impressed itself indelibly on Hamor's memory. Thymert could not frown without giving the painter exquisite pleasure; and the priest's simplest action was apt to suggest to him a memorable and passionate moment in the life of some world-famed hero. Hamor regarded his week at the islands as one of the most charming and fruitful episodes of his life.

One strange night rendered him more than ever impressed with the extraordinary power and magnetism of the priest, whom he regarded, in all sincerity, as the most profoundly interesting man he had known.

It was Saturday. Hamor had declared himself satis-

fled with the important points of his week's work; what remained, he could finish in the studio, he said. Guenn was happy in his praise, unspeakably sorry to leave the islands, completely under his magical influence. The night fell stormily, and Meurice did not come. Guenn felt in every fibre the rise of the storm, the ominous sweep of the angry winds, the threatening roar of the ocean. Her blue eyes grew black with excitement. Hamor anticipated an enjoyable experience; but Thymert, with an anxious look, said, "Guenn, Meurice cannot get in."

"Même chose," she replied.

"But you will have to stay here to-night," — discontentedly.

"Why not? I always wanted to sleep here. Surely you can find a place for such a little thing, monsieur le recteur," she said, with a charming mixture of appealing smiles and peremptoriness. "At all events, if Meurice does not come, it is evident I am here, whether you want me or not," she added. "You cannot help yourself. Boom! How the waves strike!"

"Old Jean is worse," remarked Thymert after a moment.

"But it's as much as your life is worth to cross to the Cigogne," said Guenn.

The priest shrugged his shoulders. "I shall cross all the same," he rejoined.

"Does he suffer?" asked the young girl.

"He finds no rest. He has swung his right arm in the air the whole week — slowly, like a pendulum. He is very weary. His wife tries to hold the poor arm. 'Rest, my poor Jean, rest,' she whispers. 'I cannot,' says Jean; 'I am a clock — tic-tac, tic-tac.'"

"How very curious!" exclaimed Hamor.

"Curious, monsieur?" returned the priest, with an impatient gesture and a sensitive flush. "What is curious? It is life. Jean was a clockmaker's son at Brest. He ran away to sea. He is dying. His childhood comes back to the old man. I see nothing curious in that, monsieur." Thymert rose, and measured the little room in two strides.

"I beg your pardon," said Hamor gently.

"If you go over to Jean, I shall go," Guenn asserted emphatically.

"It is too rough for a girl," the priest declared quickly.

"When was I afraid?" she demanded, springing up and standing by his side. "I shall go with you, I say."

"Ah, Guenn!" he answered, with a long look and a sigh.

"May I go too?" asked Hamor.

"What do you care about it?" The priest faced his guest almost rudely. "Why should you go? What is old Jean to you?"

Hamor hesitated. Thymert's eyes were like pent-up, smouldering fires. Then the painter said quietly, his face expressing the gentlest sympathy and deference, "I could at least help you with the boat, monsieur le recteur."

The sweetness of his temper seemed perfect to Guenn. "Yes, he can help us with the boat," she said, still standing by Thymert, grave and womanly, ready to go with him through the storm to his dying fisherman. How good and brave she was, little Guenn! What subtle comfort to his weary soul lay in this one act of hers!

The curé's tension relaxed. "Come then, monsieur, if you like," he said slowly; "and pardon my

impatient ways," he added regretfully. "I have many cares."

"Ah, monsieur le curé!" Hamor took his hand with warmth.

"How like an angel he looks!" thought Guenn, "how beautiful his smile is! and Thymert was hasty; he is often hasty with monsieur."

A silence fell upon the three. Great gusts of wind went sweeping down the long passages under the eaves, rattling the ladders, ropes and oars, and ending in a strange wailing sound. Little Erec sprang up from his sleep, and old Brigitte rushed in with a frightened face.

"*La brouette de la Mort!*" she cried, crossing herself.

Thymert and Guenn crossed themselves also. The curé opened the door, letting in a fierce blast of wind that filled the whole chapel, and shook the banners of Our Lady and the vestments in the sacristy. On the porch he stood and looked anxiously over to the Cigogne. "Not yet, not yet," he murmured, returning to the others.

The three sat waiting for the summons. Guenn's young face soft, tender, and solemn. Hamor too was gentle and solicitous, as he sat silently by the table, watching Guenn knitting steadily, and the pretty effect of her coiffe in the candlelight. He had never seen her so charming, in the fine and womanly sense, as she was to-night. Odd, too, that she should be so quiet and thoughtful, sitting at this very table where he and the other men had talked of her beauty and wildness. Hamor was extremely sorry for the curé, who evidently was taking the loss of his old fisherman sorely to heart.

Thymert came in and out, his face quiet now, but

with the trouble still in his eyes. He glanced often at Guenn, and seemed to find comfort in seeing her there; while she listened to the shrieking winds and the incessant roar of the waves, and thought of ships in peril, and heard death-calls, and wondered if Nannie was asleep, and remembered how old Jean looked the last time she had seen him, and felt pity and awe for the soul about to pass away, and wished Thymert would not be quite so sorrowful, and longed with a good will to help him; yet all the time there was deep happiness in her heart, for monsieur was looking at her kindly. He was pleased with her, the great picture had gone well; and stronger than the excitement, than her sympathy and generous affection for Thymert, and her many pitying thoughts, was the sweet sense of the painter's presence.

Thymert stood constantly at the porch now, the storm beating in his face. "My poor old Jean," he murmured often, "I know you are going to-night. They are wrong if they think you can last till to-morrow. I shall come to you, whether I see the signal or not."

Suddenly, beyond the near impenetrable darkness and the mighty waves, far up into the black heavens shot a fiery flash.

Thymert returned to the room where the two sat waiting. "They have called me," he said; "they have sent up the rocket from the fort." He laid his hand on Guenn's head, as if to protect or bless her. His face was perfectly calm, now that the dying man needed him. "Must you come, my child?" he said. "It is a terrible night."

"Yes," Guenn answered resolutely, rising and pinning a shawl over her head.

"Come, then, both of you," returned the priest.

Again the winds swept along the eaves, and the strange rattle and wail sounded high in the air. "La brouette!" whispered Guenn, raising her eyes and crossing herself.

"It is time," said the priest, and went to the sacristy. Having secured in his breast the precious case containing the viaticum, he hastily wrapped his stole in tarpaulin, thrust it into an inner pocket, seized a lantern from Brigitte and led the way down to his boats. "Hold the lantern," he said to Guenn; to Hamor, "Help me turn her over."

The boat was under cover, yet nearly full of water. It was a species of life-boat, which Thymert used when no sail could live. The two men took the oars; Guenn, her lantern hung on her arm, the tiller. The start seemed an impossibility. Again and again they were washed back upon the Loch, almost to the one dimly-lighted window of the chapel.

Another rocket went up from the Cigogne fort. Thymert bowed his head in brief prayer to Our Lady of the Isles; then threw it back grandly, set his mouth in sternness, and exclaimed with a kind of strange heathen intimacy with the angry powers of nature: "And you think then, you will keep me from him — his curé from a dying man? Are you angry that you did not get him? Are you seeking him still? Truly, poor Jean would have wished to die at sea, and not in his bed. But Our Lady willed otherwise. *Que voulez-vous?* Let me go on, I say!"

Hamor heard him with a thrill of delight. The primitive nature of the strong man seemed to be asserting itself under excitement; he chided, defied, and sought to pacify the waves, as if they were angry friends clamoring around him.

The boat breasted those first opposing breakers, and reached a safer current between two islands. It was a hard pull; but the two men were powerful, and Thymert knew his waters as a farmer knows his field-paths. Arriving at the Cigogne they met with great difficulties in landing, but were finally run violently up on the sands, where half-a-dozen men with lanterns caught and held the boat before the next wave could wash her back.

"Ah, monsieur le recteur, thank God that you are here. He is going fast," announced one of the sailors.

"Is his poor arm still?" asked Guenn pitifully.

"Yes, he cannot raise it; but his hand lies on his breast, and his forefinger makes the tic-tac, tic-tac feebly. He thinks he's a clock. He's running down fast, brave old Jean!"

The rude little house was full of people, and Jean's friends crowded about the door. His dog was howling incessantly.

Thymert stooped and entered the small doorway. With a silent greeting to the family he went to the bedside of the dying man, looked at his face, felt his pulse. "Do you know me, Jean?"

Jean opened his glazed eyes. "Yes, I know you. Tic-tac," he whispered, feebly moving his finger.

The priest motioned the family to leave the room, and, leaning over the old man's pillow, heard his whispered last confession, tenderly aiding the feeble memory and faltering voice; while the storm howled fiercely, and every listening ear heard the rolling and rattling brouette de la Mort, driven by skeletons, circling round the island in the tempest, and waiting for the soul of the dying man. Briefly the priest performed the last rites of the Church, taking from the little casket on his

breast the holy oil and the blessed sacrament. The others had stolen back into the room. Hamor stood with some men in the doorway, watching Thymert as he leaned like a pitying angel over old Jean, but with a power of human sympathy and suffering, brooding in his passionate eyes, such as no angel could ever have. The candles flickered. Jean's dog howled ceaselessly. His old wife and the other women wept and wailed aloud. Strange shadows flickered about the dusky little room, reaching up to the rudely carved ship on the wall, and the two large shells Jean had brought home from the Indies fifty years ago.

"If I could save you, my poor old Jean, if I could give you my youth and strength!" and Thymert yearned over the departing spirit. He loved every man of them, would have given his life to save any life on his islands. But he was helpless here. He too heard the brouette sweeping through the angry heavens, above the fisherman's hut.

Jean opened his eyes with a faint glance of troubled intelligence. Thymert bent lower. "At sea," murmured the dying lips of the old sailor.

"He would rather die at sea, not in this cage. Who would not indeed?" thought the priest. "But they have come for you in a storm," he said distinctly, — "the storm, the storm, Jean!"

A wild gust shook the house. One instant Jean seemed to listen, to hear its message from the free life of long-ago, to find some comfort in the thought that the storm had come to seek him; then all recognition faded out of his weather-beaten face. The weary finger began its feeble tic-tac, but the lips never spoke again. Thymert pityingly took in his own warm grasp the poor, hard-working hand, — working its way

even into the world beyond, — felt its fluttering pulse, laid it tenderly on the old man's breast. "Rest, brother," he whispered. The hand was still at last. Time had ceased for old Jean.

Guenn was standing against the wall, controlling herself stiffly, feeling as if her heart would break. The light fell on Hamor's face in the doorway; but even that could not help her grief for the old fisherman, her rebellion against the mystery of suffering and death. "Why need it be so?" thought the young girl. "And if he is going to be happy in heaven, still, why need it be like this here?"

Thymert's eyes sought hers. Guenn stepped forward. "Did you ever before see a man die?" he said, softly.

"No," she answered, with a shudder. Jean's unconscious breath was laboring still.

"But one must see this too," he said, solemnly. His loving, pitying soul shone out and illumined his dark face. He looked about the fisherman's home with unspeakable affection, yearning to save his poor folk from sorrow and pain. There was a grandeur in his presence, a loftiness which impressed Hamor profoundly.

"He is an angel, our curé," said one of the rough men by the door. "Jean's soul is going easily, because the curé is there. See! He does not struggle now."

"I tried the smoke to-day," muttered another. "It went up every time. There is no doubt about Jean. His soul will go up."

"Jean was a brave fellow. Of course the smoke went up. What could the devil do with a good Breton sailor? Our Lady rest his soul!"

The youngest grandchild, a mere baby, began pulling at Guenn's skirts, whimpering in a neglected man-

ner. She stooped and lifted the little thing. It was cold and wet, from creeping near the door where the rain swept in. The young girl laid it on her breast, covered it with her shawl, and clasped it close. It gave a little contented sigh, and fell asleep in the pleasant warmth. Guenn stood very still, for fear of waking it. One small helpless hand on her neck, and the little drooping head on her shoulder, gave her a strange sense of comfort.

When the last prayers for the departed soul had been spoken, Thymert turned and saw her patiently holding the heavy child in her arms, her face drooping tenderly over it, almost a smile on her lips. The others were kneeling; only Guenn stood erect, for fear of waking the baby.

The men were talking again, their great voices hushed in awkward but sincere respect for their mate's new honors. The women were indulging in loud weeping. Guenn was silent, motionless, a deep thoughtfulness in her beautiful eyes. Jean was dead. But Jean's baby grandson nestled on her shoulder, and the strongly lighted, dear face in the doorway was smiling warmly upon her. Already the world seemed less cruel.

Thymert looked down upon her one instant, then said very gravely: "I will ask the sergeant's wife at the fort to take care of you till morning."

"Ah, but I would rather go with you!"

"You are to stay," he rejoined.

His tone in its impressive quiet exerted absolute command. Here, on his stern islands, surrounded by the fisher-folk that loved him, in the teeth of sorrow, poverty, and death, he was supreme master. Here at least, no stranger could outrank him. Guenn yielded silently. For the moment, no girl, no individual affec-

tion, pure as it might be, moved him. All his being longed to expend itself at any sacrifice upon his people. They made way for him as he went out of the house into the roar of the surf and the winds, then back to comfort the widow and children. Thymert comforted best with his loving eyes. He was not adroit in the use of words, and in his simple mind, the mysteries of pain and death had never resolved themselves into logical clearness.

Hamor, with his intellectual sympathy and artistic comprehension, had stood unobtrusively in the narrow doorway, watching the priest as he smoothed the pillow and moistened the lips of the dying man, bending his dark, tender face over him, motioning the women to be more quiet, throwing back his noble head as he listened to the mysterious summoning voices of the storm and the night and the surges, turning his brown eyes slowly, with ineffable longing, upon the whole meagre interior, loving his folk, ready to suffer, to die, to be crucified for them in his unspeakable devotion.

The cold spray beat sharp as hail in their faces as they came out on the sands.

"Why do you go over to-night, monsieur le recteur?" asked an old fisherman, holding his lantern low, as they made their way down the rocky path. "There's not a roof that would not be proud to shelter you."

"They are restless these wild nights," Thymert replied, looking at the man earnestly.

"Ah, yes, that they are," said the old fellow sympathetically, "and no wonder."

"When I stand there among the crosses, and say a prayer for them, they are not so lonely," said the curé simply. "I never leave them bad nights, you know; God rest their brave souls!"

"Amen," returned the fisherman, crossing himself.

Jean's dog was silent now, and the brouette de la Mort had passed with the old fisherman's weary soul.

The wind blew the foam sharply in Guenn's face. She was quite wet as she stood there while they got the boat off.

"You can stay here, too, monsieur," Thymert said to Hamor. "You can stay perfectly."

"No, no!" exclaimed Hamor warmly. "Sink or swim, — I'm going with you."

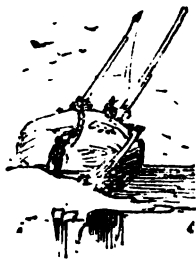
Thymert waved his hand in silent sufferance.

"Good-night, good-night," sounded in hoarse cordiality from the fishermen; "Our Lady bring you safe home!"

"Good-night," called Guenn's fresh and lovely voice.

"Hurry back instantly, Guenn," answered Thymert; "you are wet through. Good-night, child; sleep well."

The boat rose on the breakers, and the next instant disappeared in the darkness.





CHAPTER XIX.

RODELLEC refilled the mugs, watching Hoël closely. "Do I know what is going on when she stays away a week?"

"No, you don't," growled Loïc.

Hoël shook his head dubiously. It was curious how unconvinced his weak brain remained, in spite of Rodellec's arguments.

"Did she ever go off and stay a week before?"

"No, she never did," responded Loïc.

"But she came home every night, and monsieur le recteur was looking after her," Hoël suggested feebly; "where's the harm?"

"Hoël," said Rodellec impressively, "I am a father —"

"For all of me!" Hoël ejaculated desperately; "only Jeanne Ronan told me you let Guenn go yourself, free and willing; and that's the truth."

"Jeanne Ronan," said Rodellec slowly, smiling,

raising his eyebrows, shrugging his broad shoulders, and throwing back his leonine head.

"Jeanne Ronan," echoed Loïc, repeating the disparaging pantomime.

Rodellec refilled the mugs. The three men sipped their grog in silence, eying each other expectantly over the pewter rims.

"I don't say I was the happiest man in Plouvenec," began the fair-skinned, strong man, with the long chestnut hair curling about his shoulders; "Barba — Our Blessed Lady rest her soul! — was gone; my boy was lame; but my girl was honest and steady." He relapsed into an eloquent whimper.

"Honest? Steady? I should say as much! nicest little girl in Plouvenec!" exclaimed Hoël, warming with his grog. "Fresh as a cherry blossom and fierce as a bramble. No nonsense about her. I'd knock the man end over end that said there was!"

"I don't say so." Rodellec changed his tone quickly and refilled the mugs. "I only say that cursed painter has bewitched them all."

Loïc audibly consigned Hamor's soul to an undesirable final resting-place.

"He beckons, she comes; he lifts his finger, she forgets us," continued the father.

Loïc groaned.

"That gars grins and shows his white teeth, my girl follows him like a lamb. She leaves her home; she rushes off before daylight to the islands. I say it bodes no good. Where did she get her new clothes for the Pardon? She won't tell me: is n't that queer? I don't say there's anything amiss; but I have a right to inquire into these things. I am a father." He folded his arms and looked virtuous.

"Oh!" said Hoël, beginning to waver.

"Hoël, I would n't speak of this to any one else; but a friend is a friend. I want to talk this matter over quietly and calmly. I want your advice."

Hoël felt flattered. There seemed to be some justice in this.

"Mine is to punch his damned head and fling him off the digue," Loïc said, with a fierce glow in his jealous eyes.

Rodellec made a significant warning gesture with his finger across his throat, and refilled the mugs.

"If I only knew what he had done," remarked Hoël, not unreasonably.

Rodellec ignored this feeble groping after the truth. "It would be better," he suggested slowly, "to happen to meet him in some out-of-the-way place when he comes home in the twilight. If there's a quarrel, and he provokes us from words to blows, why, you see we have our tale to tell, whether he lives to tell his or not. But on the digue, there are too many people. Some fool might call an accident by an ugly name."

A pane of glass in this back room behind the orange light now shattered into fragments, and a stone almost struck Rodellec's head. With an oath he went quickly to the window and looked out; but saw nothing, because he looked too far. Crouched in complete shadow close against the house lay Nannic, who knew how to use bold measures when necessary.

"Those — boys! Little they care where their stones strike," Rodellec grumbled. "Well, never mind. As I was saying, let's meet him coming home in a lane, — a little dusky, a little quiet, a fair quarrel, of course, — under the shadow of a wall. That's where I'd like to spoil his grin, and no questions asked."

"But a fair quarrel," Hoël repeated with anxious emphasis.

"To be sure, man, to be sure!" said Rodellec, refilling the glasses and winking at Loïc. "Have I ever said anything else?"

Hoël, at last rendered receptive to Rodellec's ideas, became wildly eager to offend, injure, and exterminate the foreign gars. But this condition of mind necessitated much previous refilling of the mugs, Rodellec knew well, and was moreover fleeting as the fumes of grog that produced it. Hoël possessed that kind of weakness which is less easy to master than strength. It yields and agrees; but in the moment you need its support, you discover that your eloquence has been in vain, and that you have not advanced an inch on your projected path. Rodellec's cause was bad; but Hoël's instability would have been a no less confusing factor, had the end in view been creditable. The man had a reputation for harmlessness which neither Rodellec nor young Nives could boast. The latter had been involved in several bad affairs where knives were too quickly drawn and too cruelly used, and many episodes in his short but varied career were hushed up by neighbors and friends. As for Rodellec himself, no one posed more for the franc Breton than he, and being prominently jovial among his men friends, the rough folk about him did not concern itself much with his buried past. Yet there were half-forgotten tales alluded to when drink and anger loosened the tongue of some man who had known him in his uncurbed youth, tales which a public imprudence might at any time revive unpleasantly. Rodellec would not have cared to be cross-examined in regard to the smugglers on the Gavrinz; and nothing would have been less congenial

to him than a vivid recoloring of a certain picture in his memory, dulled by time and insensibility, but still capable of producing a glaring and painful effect. A storm, a wreck, fierce men with lanterns on a rough coast greedily seizing what the waves brought. Surely what the angry sea laid at their feet was their own, the wreckers reasoned. The sea had taken from one crew and given to another. Who could gainsay the sea in its wrath? Yet to snatch a casket from a jaded swimmer's breast, and knock him over the cruel rocks back into the angry waves, where he had struggled so manfully for his life, and a mere finger's touch would have helped him to the safe shore—Well, Rodellec was young in those days it is true, and the men were rough and not rigid-righteous; but many years' hypocrisy was needed before he could fairly retake his place among them. "It was a bitter night," he said. "I had been working hard. The liquor went to my head. You know how it is yourself. I never knew what I did. Don't let us talk about it. God rest his soul!" So he spoke to his cronies, and Hoël for one always believed him.

There was a mystery connected with Rodellec's wife's last illness, and an uncertainty in regard to the cause of Nannic's lameness; but the marital and paternal right to enforce authority with a blow was not in general disputed in Plouvenec—certainly never so strongly resented that a little more or less violence in this respect would be apt to make a sensation. Then what we believe or do not believe of our neighbors seems often a matter of accident or imagination rather than of judgment. We assume that most incredible things are true of strangers, and delight in positively knowing thoughts and motives which it would seem only the eye

of omniscience could discern ; but we are blind where we wish to be blind, and refuse to recognize the existence of facts that stand like granite monuments in our daily path.

Rodellec had an evil but a quiet conscience. He did not intend to disturb the stagnant pools of his memory. There being, as he said, lanes and twilights enough at his disposition, he was determined to gratify his desires without compromising himself too seriously, and, above all, not to move in the matter without Hoël. Had Hoël been with them that night, the granary would have blazed up, he was fully persuaded ; but old Morot, and that fellow with the ghastly white face in the waves, and Loïc's Spanish sailor, made a spiritual alliance against them too strong to be overcome. Strange that a little slip could have such far-reaching consequences, and stranger still that the murdered dead should hang together in this clannish fashion. Well, they were none of them at swords' points with Hoël. Hoël had better take his turn and have his little experience, Rodellec reflected smilingly, showing his agreeable white teeth.

Hamor, in the mean time, went whistling through the lanes, and singing through the twilights, and made friends everywhere. One could with difficulty have persuaded him that he had foes. So harmless, so kindly, so considerate a man as he? Absurd. He was conscious of having done faithful and creditable work. The picture for the Salon was well along. It was now December, and he had until March to finish it. He had put it aside for a time, studying it each day, but doing no actual work upon it until his impressions should be again quite fresh. Guenn was,

however, every day in the studio, for he never knew at what moment he might be moved to need her again. She posed frequently for Staunton in the room below. He found her restless, and complained that her mouth had a way of growing heavy when he kept her long; but he paid small attention to his models in these days, for at Christmas he was going to marry the little Danish artist. He was so much in love that the vision of two painters under one roof seemed to him the most natural and charming prospect imaginable; and the conventional and cautious Staunton was about to flatly contradict his traditions, and marry, for pure love, a simple girl without family or prestige, of whose antecedents he knew nothing. But perhaps we are truer when we most inconsistently contradict ourselves, than when we fully coincide with what the world has made us. Hamor and Douglas rubbed their hands in delight over Staunton's condition, but being men, did not jeer at his new departure.

Hamor was also occupying himself with various ébauches of Thymert. He decided that something acutely human would best represent the man, — a motive full of tangible emotion. There was a rocky, sandy point opposite Plouvenec, which he had studied several times. He was, in fact, coming up from it the day Guenn had sculled him across the ferry. A shipwreck — indicated of course — might be interesting, and this strong man in intense grief beside the body of some one he loved, — his friend or his wife. Thymert should be half-stripped, his hand clutching the sand, his face set in agony, looking into his lost past. Should it be a friend closer than a brother, whom he had tried to save, or should it be a woman? Hamor considered. There was something to be said on both sides. He

enjoyed nothing more than the fanciful building up of motives. He erected and destroyed scores of such castles every day.

One morning Douglas was with him, and Guenn sat knitting in a window-seat. It was raining hard; but the sky looked promising, and the painters were hoping to be able to work out of doors in the afternoon. "Come, Guenn," said Hamor, suddenly, "just take off your coiffe a moment, and lie down there on your face, with your arms stretched out. I'll show you how."

Guenn did not move.

"Did n't you hear?" he said pleasantly. "Slip all your head-gear off, please. I wish to try an effect of drowned maiden's hair, Douglas. It would have to be wet, you know, — quite wet, if I should really paint her. I'm not sure but I prefer the man. There's something stronger in man's friendship. At least it always moves me more."

"You prefer David and Jonathan to Romeo and Juliet then?" drawled Douglas.

"Much," answered Hamor; then for the first time looked up, surprised at Guenn's delay.

She sat perfectly still in the window, her eyes cast down, her cheeks crimson.

"Come here, Guenn," he said.

She came obediently to his side, but did not raise her eyes.

The Puritan look appeared in Hamor's face, — narrow, reproving, honest, and mistaken. "Guenn, I certainly have not been inconsiderate of your Breton ways and national prejudices. But I think after this long time, knowing me as well as you do, you ought not to hesitate to show me your hair, if I wish it. Jeanne or

Victoria would obey me instantly. You should surely know by this time that to us painters your hair is no more than your face, whatever your Breton idea may be."

Still Guenn waited, breathing fast, clasping her hands convulsively, her long lashes drooping.

Hamor thought her unreasonable and obstinate.

Douglas looked up from his work. "Oh, come now, let her go; they have their notions, you know," he said kindly.

"My model is my model," Hamor replied stiffly. "The girl has the most beautiful hair I ever saw. I have treated her well. Very few men are as careful of models as I am. There is no reason under the sun why she should not take off her coiffe."

Douglas shrugged his shoulders.

"Off with it, Guenn. If you don't remove it, I shall."

She did not stir, but the muscles round her mouth quivered, and she raised her beautiful eyes once to his face, with no reproach, but only piteous inquiry, pain, and utter defeat in their blue depths. "Was I mad then? He would rather have had the hair? *Mon dieu, mon dieu!* how could I know that? He did not care for the dancing or the new gown. Now he wants the hair, and I have none to please him. How could I make this terrible mistake? It was so long and brown and shining and wavy; it reached quite to my knees. And now he needs it, and I have none, — not even what the other girls have, — and mine was the prettiest! If Our Lady would only make it grow in one instant! Or if I could sink into the earth, before he sees!"

"Guenn," said the painter kindly but seriously, "we won't have any nonsense." He calmly approached, untied the tape wound tightly once or twice around her head, then removed the coiffe.

She made no resistance. Douglas was watching gravely. Beneath the coiffe, instead of the usual series of close caps, was but one cap, which Hamor gently took off. No one could resent his manner. It was as firm, dignified, and lofty as that of a judge whom conscience and the obligations of office compelled to pronounce sentence on a Massachusetts witch a hundred years ago. But the judicial merged into the boyish as he took one step back and exclaimed, "By Jove!"

Anything more bewitching than the little head, drooping before him in utter self-abasement, no man had ever seen. Warm and moist from the caps, her hair lay flat, like a baby's, in soft, shining rings.

"Upon my word!" Hamor ejaculated, beginning to laugh.

Two hot tears of mortification stole into Guenn's eyes.

"Well, I won't laugh," said the painter good-naturedly; "it's pretty as it is, Guenn. But what possessed you to be such a little idiot? I tell you she had the most superb growth of hair I ever saw," he added, turning to Douglas. "What made you do it?" he asked curiously. He was speaking kindly now, and Guenn could answer.

"I wanted some money," she muttered.

"For what?"

"For the Nevin Pardon," she replied mechanically, with a strange indistinctness in her voice.

"Good heavens!" exclaimed the young man, regarding her speculatively. "Well, Guenn, I won't reproach you." He felt that this was rather magnanimous, since he actually at this moment needed her lost locks. "It's your affair, of course. Just run out and

find somebody with long hair, will you? sunny brown, as much like yours as possible, — and a long kind of girl, if you can find her, one that belongs with the hair, you know. You are not long, but your lines give the effect of length. Can you find somebody?" he asked carelessly.

"Oh, yes!" she answered, pulling on her coiffe and turning away. Her voice sounded hoarse.

"Guenn!" called Hamor, as she reached the door, — he often had an amiable impulse, — "you don't mind my laughing? You looked like such a baby, you know. Of course you have every right to cut off your own hair if you like. You are not cross because I laughed?"

"Oh, no, monsieur!" and she tried to smile.

"By the way, if you send somebody along for an hour or so now, I shall not need you any more to-day: I shall be down on the Point until dark. Come in to-morrow, as usual, will you?"

"Yes," said Guenn faintly, — and went to find a girl whose hair was long as her own used to be. It seemed to her if monsieur had not turned away his head that day, his laugh just now would not have hurt her so much. "Léna's hair is long and brown, — longer than anybody's since I cut mine off. She won't want to come, but I'll make her. If I have not what he needs, I must find somebody who has," she moaned, with a grand kind of reasoning for a woman. "But, oh, my hair, my long, pretty hair! how could I know he would need it some day? How could I know?" And she went to find Léna.

"Well," remarked Hamor, as she went out, "women are all alike. If it is n't one vanity, it's another."

"H'm," said Douglas, doubtfully, "I don't pretend to know much about them."

"Without conceit, I must admit that I think I do," said Hamor.

That afternoon he went down to the Point, and intended when it grew dark to come home the long way through the chemins creux, and along the shore-road to the ferry. But happily, just as he was obliged to stop work, a boat appeared, and Meurice's hearty voice hailed him.

Hamor was only too glad, after a busy day, to take a turn on the bay. He came back to dinner in high spirits and with an excellent appetite. It struck him that it was odd Meurice happened to be down there contrary to his habit, but he forgot to ask why. Indeed it was a matter of no importance whatever. The main thing was, that he had had a charmingly invigorating sail in the dusk.

Between five and six dense darkness prevailed in the lanes through which Hamor always returned from the Point. Behind a great wall, where a narrow path intersected a broader, stood three men.

"You get in his way, and when he objects, trip him up."

"Accidentally —" mumbled Hoël. The ivy-leaves above his head began to rustle softly.

"However you like," Rodellec answered impatiently; "only do it." He had heard enough of Hoël's scruples. "You begin; we'll finish."

"He's late," grumbled Loïc Nives.

Presently sabots sounded on the stepping-stones. "The gars walks like a cat," thought Hoël. The footsteps came nearer. Hoël peered from behind the corner of the wall. It was very dark; but surely the painter was taller than this. Rodellec from behind gave an impatient signal. "It must be the grog that

makes my eyes queer," thought Hoël, rushing violently against the advancing person, who, however, received him with a very well aimed blow in the breast.

"Keep to your own side of the road, will you?" called a girl's voice, angrily. "What do you mean, — stupid! almost knocking a body down?"

"The devil!" exclaimed Hervé Rodellec, and lighted his lantern.

"Where's your milk-faced painter?" demanded Loïc, furiously. His unguarded words were checked too late by Rodellec.

Guenn stood looking at them with unutterable scorn, measuring them from head to foot. "Oh! you were waiting for Monsieur Hamor, were you?" she said slowly. "What! only three? Was there nobody else to keep you company and lurk in the dark, and strike down a young fellow that comes singing along the lanes, because he's got a good conscience and never did any harm to anybody in all his life?"

Hoël felt suddenly sobered, and began to look uncomfortable. Guenn had not yet glanced at her father, who was wrathfully considering the awkward turn of events.

"Who told you we were waiting for Hamor?" Nives asked sullenly.

"You yourself just now, Loïc Nives, with your own stupid tongue!" she answered cleverly.

He could not deny this, and cursed his awkwardness.

"Who said we were going to do any harm?" asked Hoël, in his weak fashion.

"When three men — like you — hide in a place like this, after dark," — she shrugged her shoulders significantly.

"Now see here," Rodellec at last began: "you

can't play anything off on us. We've got you here, and answer you shall." His tone was so rough and threatening that even Nives stepped forward with some anxiety.

Guenn folded her arms across her breast, and looked calmly at her father. "Now I must be wise for his sake," she thought, her heart beating high with courage and devotion. The evening breeze seemed, curiously enough, to be stirring the ivy-leaves only in one spot.

"Don't you lie now!"

"I never lie," answered the girl, with her proud air.

"Where did you leave him?"

"Leave whom?"

"Don't catechise me! You know well enough. him, — the painter, — Hamor," roared Rodellec.

"In his atelier, at half-past ten o'clock this morning."

He thrust the lantern close to her face. It almost seemed that she was smiling.

"Is that the last time you saw him?"

"Yes."

Rodellec threw the lantern light along the dark roads, and peered suspiciously in every direction.

"You need n't think he's hiding! You need n't think he sent me, a girl, along in front of him. *He* is n't a coward!" she exclaimed, with involuntary but triumphant emphasis.

"Where have you been?" Rodellec continued his cross-examination.

"Across the fields to Marie Brenn's," she returned promptly, "because her grandmother's had a fall, and Marie has double work."

"Where's the painter?"

"I heard him say this morning that he was going

down on the Point. I told you, I have n't seen him since," she replied, with well-assumed carelessness, standing always erect before them, her arms folded, her head high, her eyes fearless and watchful.

"Are you going to tell him to-morrow that he 'd better not sing along lanes after dark for fear of spoiling his voice?" demanded Nives, jealous and angry.

She could not resist a mocking reply. "If you don't do more harm than you've done to-night, I shall need to tell nothing whatever."

Her father leaned towards her fiercely. "And if we do?"

"But you won't, you know," she said nonchalantly.

He made an ugly movement.

"Let her alone, Rodellec. She is n't to blame," urged Nives, brutal himself, but young and in love.

She turned towards him aggressively, her hands on her hips. "Suppose you hold your tongue, Loïc Nives. Guenn Rodellec never needed such as you to fight her battles, and less this moment than ever before. I despise you and your ways, and I'll never give you a decent word again as long as I live! Skulking behind a wall. Shame!"

"Stop that, you vixen," interposed her father.

"Answer me. Did you tell that fool not to come home this way?"

"I did not tell Monsieur Hamor," with a respectful intonation, "not to come home this way."

"Did you tell him we were waiting for him?"

"I did not."

"Did you know we were waiting for him?"

Guenn tossed her wisdom and coolness to the night-winds. She flung up her arms, let them fall with her desperate gesture, and said hotly: "Oh, what does it

matter what I know, or don't know! I know there's mischief brewing. Isn't that enough? I know an honest man's not safe to go his own way and think his own thoughts. Isn't that enough? I know three Bretons — Plouvenec men, good sailors," — her voice rose passionately with every word, — "brave enough on sea to be something better than cowards and murderers on land — are standing here glaring at me, a girl, as if they were afraid of me, because their hearts are blacker than the night they've chosen for their dirty work. That's what I know. Make the most of it!"

"Hush! he will kill you," cried Hoël, in terror, stepping between father and child, as Rodellec's face darkened with rage.

"You look ashamed. You'd better go home, Hoël," she retorted contemptuously. "What are you doing here? Whether I am killed or not, I don't want help from a man who sneaks behind a wall, ready to give a blow in the back, — a dark night, in a lonely lane!"

"Guenn, little Guenn, pretty little lass," cried Hoël, "I have always liked you, I always took your part."

"Sneak, I say!" she replied, turning her back upon him.

In some way the young girl, helpless in the dark lane before these men, seemed to be getting the better of them.

"What has he ever done to any of you?" she went on. "Nothing, and you know it! Kill me if you will. Chop me up in little pieces, and fling me over the wall! What do I care? You can't frighten me. You can't prevent me from having my say. You have had yours," she faced her father directly. "I never told of you, so help me, my dead mother. But you've made me answer before these men. Now answer me!"

Before the imperious, ringing voice every man of them felt abashed. Rodellec was the first to rally.

"Look here now. This high and mighty won't do."

"I want to know what he has ever done to you," she persisted.

"This is the first time I ever saw a girl trying to confess her own father," sneered Rodellec. "One thing he's done, — he's bewitched you, sure enough. He's made you forget what a steady honest girl ought to remember."

"He has n't," cried Guenn, with flashing eyes. "He never did anything in his life that was n't good, — too good for such as you to understand!"

"Guenn," said Hoël, timidly, touching her in an ingratiating manner on the elbow, "don't be angry. I don't mean any harm, you know. It would be natural enough for any man, I don't deny, — such a pretty little lass as you are. But did he ever — kiss you — quite accidental-like, of course?"

"He!" exclaimed the girl, with superb scorn for the question and questioner. "That shows how mean your thoughts are. He! — he never thought of anything so small as that. He only thinks of sunsets and lovely colors, and great drooping trees and the sea, and every little flower and herb, and every little child's face. He has a kind word for everybody, and a beautiful smile. When the old men and women sit along the road too weary to move, the sight of his bright face is a rest and a comfort. He lifts every little child up in his arms. He cares for a lame dog, for a tired horse, for everything that suffers. I've seen him look sorry for a faded rose. And you — cowards — hide here to kill him!"

Her clear and fresh voice rang out boldly on the still night. In the brief pause that followed her indignant

words, the dry leaves rustled continuously above her head.

"You need n't shout it through all Cornouaille," Loïc muttered sullenly.

Rodellec watched her with his evil frown.

"Well, Guenn," began Hoël apologetically, "tell us one thing. I've heard hints for weeks; I'm tired of hints. Now tell me, and I shall know. Who gave you your fine clothes for the Pardon?"

In an instant she had torn the coiffe from her head. What need had she to keep her secret now! "Oh, that's what's the matter! Look! Enjoy it! I cut it off myself. It was the prettiest hair in Plouvenec, the longest, the brownest. Well, I cut it off because I wanted to, because I wanted some money. Have you men who hide behind walls anything to say against that?"

The lantern-light flashed strongly on her face and slender figure, swaying excitedly as she spoke. She was vivid as a flame in the darkness. The men stared at her in amazement, and felt ill at ease.

She passed her fingers through the mass of short, closely curling hair. "There it is. Look at it. Look to your heart's content." She turned completely round. "Are you satisfied? Then I'll put on my coiffe."

"What I want to know, and what I will know, is how you in your impudence find out my plans," said Rodellec, with a great oath.

She laughed bitterly. "Does one need to be wise for that?—when you three leave the other men and whisper together nights, when you scowl at Monsieur Hamor crossing the common, when you watch every step he takes, and follow him when he stands on the edge of the digue smiling in the starlight, smiling down on the water, happy with his beautiful thoughts?"

There was a vigorous rustling in the great ivy-vines on the wall.

"What makes you watch him so close?" sneered her father.

She gave a little start, then answered coldly, "Everybody in Plouvenec knows Guenn Rodellec likes fair play; I would n't see a dog hurt if I could help it."

Her father looked at her with intense suspicion. "There's something I don't get at," he muttered. "Have you ever put him on his guard against us? Does he know I hate him?"

"If he knows, it's because he is n't blind, and has seen the hate in your eyes. For never a word have I told of what I see and know, and feel all the time in the air. But he's so sunny-hearted he forgets, and so brave he does n't care!"

"If you are lying to me!—if you told him not to come back by this lane to-day!"

"But I did n't," she cried vehemently. "I tell against Plouvenec men, unless it was to save a life? I, Guenn Rodellec, say to a strange gars that three Breton sailors are three mean, dirty cowards? I would bite out my tongue first. Can't you see that I am ashamed, deathly ashamed of you, —ashamed of myself for belonging to you? I would rather die than tell such a thing to him, —than put anything so ugly, so like a creeping slimy snake among his beautiful white thoughts. Oh, it is no use talking about him to you," she said, with disdain. "You can't understand. You crawl in the dirt. He is up among the clouds. His life is as far from yours as heaven from earth. Don't I know? Haven't I seen, day by day? And I did n't know at first; I did not understand. I was like you — except," haughtily, "I never was a coward. And because he is

good you hate him ! Because everybody loves him ; because he is kind to all Plouvenec ; because he does not get drunk, and lose his brain, and act like a madman and a beast ! Because he works harder than you all, early and late, and when he is tired and discouraged ; for I know when he is that, I know every line of his face — and he is patient, he does n't rave and swear like you. Because his life is clean like his hands, you hate him, — cowards ! Oh, I was proud of my Plouvenec, — and now, — now — I am ashamed ! ”

There was a most persistent rustle of dissatisfaction in the ivy-leaves, but Guenn paid no heed to that, or to her father's menacing face.

“ Oh, I shall speak now ! ” she said ; “ nobody can stop me. I did n't mean to speak like this ; but you would make stones speak. I came along here because I thought I'd find out exactly how bad you are ; but I'll tell you this much, Hoël,” — she laughed scornfully, — “ if you'd run against Monsieur Hamor as stupidly as you did against me, he'd have flung you over the wall, — easy ! And I'll tell you again, he did not know you were waiting for him here ; for then he would have come along the lanes, singing louder and gayer than ever. That's the kind of a gars he is ! And if you want to know about me, and what I'm going to do, I'll tell you three, — straight in your faces, — I never did tell of you. She who is gone knows that,” — facing her father now squarely. “ I never knew how to tell of you.” A great sob broke in her innocent throat. “ I never will tell of you if I can help it ; but I will keep you from harming a hair of his head. I shall find you out, whatever you do. I will stand between him and you. I would never have stood against a Plouvenec man in a fair fight with any stranger living, not even him ; but cowards

and murderers sha'n't have their way with a man like him, — not while I can spy out their wicked plots, and tell them to their faces what I think of them, — as I tell you now, you three! And if the day comes when I must go to him and stand before him (I know well how he will look that day with his high head and smiling eyes), if I must say 'Hoël and Nives and Rodellec are howling after you, like wolves thirsting for your innocent blood,' — I will say it, so help me Our Lady of the Isles. If you act, I act. If you are quiet, I am quiet. If I can save him without speaking, I will. If not, — I speak! I, Guenn Rodellec, say it; and here I am!"

"And I, Hervé Rodellec," began her father, incensed by her open defiance, and raising his brutal fist, when a loud, unearthly shriek from behind him stayed his hand. The three men crossed themselves, and Rodellec tremblingly raised the lantern, disclosing on the very top of the wall, comfortably extended on the giant ivy-stems, Nannic, his weird face strongly lighted, his head and supporting arms in shadow, his body completely out of sight.

"Look!" he exclaimed, pointing to the opposite wall. Rodellec turned. "How it beckons, beckons, beckons, with its poor, pale arm!"

A dead branch was moving slightly in the breeze and tapping on the granite. In the dim light and stillness it was not difficult for eyes blinded by superstition to see whatever was expected of them.

"A Spanish sailor with blood upon his breast; a white, white face in the foam; a woman's poor, pale arm," chanted the child on the wall.

They stared as if under a spell, crossed themselves abjectly, and muttered startled, fragmentary prayers. Guenn smiled gratefully at Nannic.

Rodellec at length forced a laugh. "It's only his monkey-tricks," he said apologetically, and coughed.

"It beckons to you with a bony hand!" warned the solemn voice from the wall. "The Spanish sailor looks at Loïc; the face in the waves at you—at you." There was another uncomfortable pause.

"You, who know everything," remarked Rodellec with assumed indifference, and anxious to change the subject, "tell us where Hamor the painter is."

"Gone out for a sail with Meurice, to be sure," answered Nannic promptly in his natural voice, and with an audacious wink at Hoël. His change of tone always made his audience start, a circumstance in which he took great delight.

"If that's true, we might as well go home," muttered Nives.

"I was hoping he'd still be coming along, in spite of her yarn," returned Rodellec.

"I've lost my appetite this time, and no mistake," said Hoël, disconsolately.

"You are ashamed of yourself, Hoël," Guenn said coolly; "that's what's the matter with you."

"Well, I am, and that's a fact, Guenn. I said all along I wanted a fair fight."

"Don't talk to me of fair fights, you drivelling coward!"

"We've had enough of you, do you hear? We don't want any more of your tongue!" Rodellec shouted angrily.

"Very good," rejoined the girl; "but what my tongue has said and your ears have heard is true this night, and true for all my life. You know what lies between us; you know what to expect. Remember, you three!"

"Trust me for not forgetting!" returned her father, with a threatening look. "It's awkward, this business," he began, as they walked along. "We shall have to wait. It will all come right in time; but we must wait till she gets over her tantrums. Nice brood I've got; the devil fly away with them! Never mind, Hoël," with a jovial blow on his friend's shoulder, "it was n't your fault that the canvas-dauber was n't there. We old sailors will wait for the tide to turn, eh?"

"No boat of mine sails these plaguy waters again," Hoël rejoined morosely. "Pretty little lass, standing up and fighting fair, and giving it to us as hard as ever she could! No, no, Rodellec, I've had enough of it. Let the painter go; let Guenn have her way."

"We'll see; we'll see, old man," returned Rodellec consolingly.

Nannic climbed, not too well but wisely, down the wall, and stood beside his sister, regarding her in the dark with a kind of compassion. "Girls are fools," he remarked impressively. It was merely his way of saying, "You have had trop de zèle."

"Yes, I know," she answered with meekness; "but don't mind, Nannic. I could n't hold back any longer; I had to fly at them. I should have burst."

"You began decently, but spoilt everything when you told all you knew. Girls always tell all they know."

"Do they?" she answered gently.

"Why did n't you say you threw the stone, and I crept in the shadow and listened? Why did n't you tell them that the Lord himself does n't follow them closer than I do?—only the Lord does n't stop their fun, and I stop it—don't I?—every time. Why did n't you say that I heard them again that night on the digue, and that you told Meurice to go for monsieur to-day,

and that you can wind Meurice round your finger? Why did n't you tell that you — well, you did tell that pretty much, and if their brains were n't as dull as a hoe —”

“ Never mind, Nannic,” she begged softly ; “ can you keep him away from me to-night, do you think ? ”

“ Don't know. He never was madder ; he'll come home red-hot. Perhaps you'd better sleep at Jeanne's, *accidental-like*, as Hoël says.” He laughed contemptuously.

They walked on in silence through the dark lane. Guenn slipped her hand in his.

“ It would be a pity to hurt me,” she murmured, “ before the picture is quite done, — a great pity.”

She sighed softly, and Nannic chuckled to himself in the darkness, as he limped along the lane.

“ That is n't the only pity,” he grumbled. “ There's a great deal that's a pity. It's a pity that one is born. It's a pity that one must live. It's a pity that one must die. But there's one thing that is n't a pity, — that there are fools to laugh at. I'm going to laugh at one to-night. You sleep at Jeanne's all the same. You keep out of the way.”



CHAPTER XX.



ICH in beauty, soft in temperature, the Breton winter wore on. Not a great distance from Paris, yet the heat and cold of the capital in its extremes never reached the mild Plouvenec climate, — tempered, the painters believed, into moderation exclusively for their needs.

It was rarely so cold that they could not sit eight hours in the open air, and against sabots, corduroys, youth, and health the dampness made little headway; while the atmospheric conditions were entrancing. A painter indeed could hardly retain his sober senses, and could be excused for extravagant language, when, in the early evenings, all things were so submerged in gleaming opal light, that even the gloomy island fortress was forced to yield to the soft charm, and, suffused with rose color, showed that it too, in its hard, cold way, was looking at the sunset.

Staunton married the little Danish girl at Christmas; and a month after, Douglas, having a good opportunity, went to Spain with a friend. These changes Hamor regarded philosophically, and in fact was no less happy now that his evenings were not enlivened by scientific

whist. On the contrary, he attached himself more and more to his queer and lonely studio; and nights, when winds howled, he would sit alone by his cheerful fire reading a good book, absolutely content with his bachelorhood, and untroubled by the world. His fire was his delight and pride. He heaped upon it piles of broom and indulged in genial reminiscence of great crackling camp-fires of pine-branches at home, by noble Mt. Katahdin, where all night long under the stars he had communed with friends. He remembered, too, camping out in Western woods, and one special fire which he had guarded night and day for weeks, to cheer his hunter and guide, suddenly taken ill on the march. That was a strange experience, Hamor reflected, as he sat one evening in the atelier. "How I hunted for him, cooked for him, cared for him! How gratefully he smiled! Good fellow! I wish I might see him again. He'd go through fire and water for me. It certainly is worth while to do a kind thing now and then. 'March with his hammers comes knocking at our doors,' says the Breton ballad; and March with his hammers seems inclined to take off my granary roof. Yet it is still here, after all, — heavenly still," he thought, — "no fumes of absinthe and vermouth, no clicking of billiard-balls, no vulgar voices. As for the wind, I like it; as for the draughts, I am strong; as for my incumbent, the ghost, thank God, I am not superstitious. 'Tired with all these, for restful death I cry,'" he read aloud, mouthing the words cheerfully, when his door flew violently open, reminding him involuntarily of that morning, months ago, when Guenn Rodellec stormed into his room. He turned his head expectantly.

Guenn, breathless from running, shot like an arrow

to the fireplace and dropped on her knees. "O monsieur, O monsieur!" she moaned, rocking to and fro.

Hamor had been reading Shakespeare's Sonnets, as he always read them, with pure delight. Sometimes there was a sensationalism about Guenn Rodellec which irritated him. He looked down upon the coiffe bowed over the two little hands—rough still, in spite of the cake of soap from Quimper; upon the crimson kerchief he saw every day; upon the coarse skirts and sabots. Surely this was not fitting apparel for high tragedy. He felt a certain impatience with her attitude. Why did she kneel on the hearth-rug? Why would she not stand up and be sensible?

"Well?" he said, in somewhat cold interrogation.

"O monsieur!" exclaimed the girl, struggling painfully for breath, while the genêt fire crackled in unconscious cheerfulness. She looked in a confused way round the familiar room. "They are coming," she gasped.

"Who?" he said impatiently.

"They—Hoël and Nives and he."

Hamor frowned slightly. These rough Bretons seemed wholly irrelevant to the pure diction of the sonnet, and his restful evening solitude. Guenn herself was too staccato for his mood. "Coming? Where? Here? When am I to have the pleasure of receiving the gentlemen, and what in the deuce do they want?"

"Not so smiling—for the love of heaven, not so careless! O, how shall I tell you! Go and get Monsieur Staunton, and then it will be bad enough."

"Monsieur Staunton?"

"Because he won't tell. He will stand by you, and be silent afterwards. Oh, don't ask me questions,—only go." She shuddered palpably.

"Why, Guenn, I believe you are actually frightened," he said kindly.

She broke into wild sobs. "O monsieur, you don't know them. This time it is for life or death. Please go for your friend; and even then—" There was a slight sound in the court. She started violently, and listened.

"Guenn, child, be sensible. I thought you were proud of your courage; I thought you claimed to be the pluckiest girl in Plouvenec."

She looked at him strangely, listening always, with painful intentness, to every sound without. He was speaking in a sententious, deliberate way that nearly drove her mad.

"Three against one is not what men, as a rule, consider a fair fight, you know. No doubt it is an Anglo-Saxon prejudice; still—" Suddenly reflecting the girl had come out of pure kindness to warn him against her own race and kin, it occurred to him that it was not in the best taste to regale her with his mild irony; he therefore left his remark unfinished. "Come, Guenn, you can understand this, I am sure," he began simply. "These men are stronger than I, as anybody can see. But I know better how to use my strength; consequently I think I can make it sufficiently unpleasant for them. Now you run home again and go to sleep. It's all right, you know. You are a good girl to warn me, since you think it necessary. I do not. I trust my own good fist,"—smiling in a superior and reassuring way, and patting her shoulder quite paternally. "Thank you very much, Guenn, but I shall not disturb Monsieur Staunton."

He had not risen from his chair or laid down his book. Throwing back his head, he went on instructively.

"Did you ever think what would happen if horses and oxen knew their own strength? It is well that some beasts are ignorant of their vast possibilities for evil. Now I know most of mine." He laughed carelessly.

"Monsieur," said Guenn, not hearing a word of this chapter of natural history, dropping suddenly to the floor again, half kneeling, half crouching by his side, her hands pressed convulsively together, her face pale as death, her blue eyes dilated with fear, her voice unspeakably sweet and appealing, in spite of its tremor and the extreme rapidity of her utterance, "you are content with me because I have learned to pose so well; is it not so? You say I pose best of all the girls. You tell me I have helped make the great picture, and often you think you would like to give me a pleasure. And I always say no, for I want nothing. Is it not so, dear monsieur? But now is the time to give me a pleasure, — now, this moment. Go for Monsieur Staunton. Oh, do not look like that. I cannot bear it. Not so smiling! I shall die if you smile so! Ah, must I tell you? Must I say how bad they are? Loïc has his sailor-knife, and Hoël an oak club, and he — he has a pistol; and I heard what they said, and I know what they mean in their bad, bad hearts!"

Hamor for the first time looked excited. The vein in the middle of his forehead jumped into prominence.

"H'm," glancing uneasily around his room. "What can the brutes want? What have I done to them?"

"God knows, monsieur. Never mind what. They have been trying to hurt you all winter. You have not noticed. That was natural, monsieur. They have been prevented always —" she hesitated an instant, "in one way or another," she resumed quickly. "They think you are going away soon. To-night they have

sworn to kill you. They know you sit here alone evenings. They have chosen to-night because the wind is high. Shame on them that this is the truth! Shame on me, a Plouvenec girl, that must say it!" she moaned, wringing her hands in anguish.

"When do they propose to descend upon me?" he demanded. "You have not told me that." He had felt startled. The vision of three assassins attacking an unarmed man has not precisely a sedative effect upon the bravest spirit. Now his indignation and combativeness were roused. He began to design a fitting reception for the cowards. "When?" he repeated with animation.

"If I tell him the truth, that they are coming now, that they may be here any moment, he will stay, and all is lost," was her agonized thought. "Shame, shame, that I must lie to him! Shame on them,—shame on us all. But since lie I must, I will lie well!" She sprang up, straightened herself, looked in his eyes, and answered deliberately, "In an hour."

"Oh, then there's no need of haste," sinking calmly back in his chair.

"But monsieur may have difficulty in finding Monsieur Staunton," urged Guenn desperately.

"Oh no," laughed Hamor, "Monsieur Staunton is as easy to find as the lighthouse. He is at home with his wife."

"But if our people don't find monsieur here, they will seek him elsewhere," she stammered. "They are full to the throat with drink and hate. It would be better to fight here than on the public street, monsieur?" She was listening always, her soul in her eyes.

"True enough, child," he admitted, muttering to himself; "and where can man fight better than by his own

hearthstone, rented, with all appurtenances, for twenty francs a month?"

Guenn watched him in mute agony. If she said too much she would betray herself, yet there was not a moment to be lost. He slowly arranged his fire. He thought, as every man thinks, that he was peculiarly clever with a fire. He brandished the tongs with the dignity befitting a man whose fires are not as other men's fires, who builds his structure according to his own unique system, and surveys the result with just pride. Hamor never picked up a fallen ember, and laid it across the central blaze, without a certain amount of ingenuous self-glorification. He had it finally to his satisfaction, well back and compact in the chimney, the back-log discreetly covered with ashes, the andirons slightly pulled out. Then he put the shovel and tongs in their places, and looked down approvingly.

Guenn saw always three dark forms approaching stealthily through the night. "Where are they now? Have they landed? Is there yet time?"

Hamor took off his coat and brushed it, smiling at this sudden access of punctiliousness. "Madame Staunton, it is your doing," he thought with amusement. "Now when I go to see Staunton and his wife I always feel rather queer, as if I would not object myself to having a little woman about evenings. There is something in it, after all. But good heavens! what woman, charming enough to please me, would ever consent to obliterate herself days for the honor of enlivening my evening hours? It may succeed with Staunton. It looks as if it would. But painters in general ought not to marry. It is asking too much of the woman. Art, my art, be gracious to your slave! Only be gracious, my love, my wife, my mistress, my goddess,

and let the others purr in their chimney-corners. *Je m'en moque bien !*"

He put on his coat and looked round the atelier. "In an hour, did you say?" He intended to be ready for the rascals, but he did not like to feel that he must hurry on their account.

"In an hour," she repeated in a strained voice.

"Perhaps it would be wise to do something with the picture," Hamor soliloquized. "It's paying rather too much of a compliment to the brutes! Still, months of work, — and that last bit of painting on the wrist I shall never happen to do so well again."

"Monsieur, I will take care of the picture."

"But how, child? There is no place."

"I will, monsieur knows I will. Is it not my picture? Don't I want to stand in the Salon before all the grand people?" She tried to smile and toss her head. "The picture shall be safe, if monsieur will only go — only go now!"

"Ah, if it's a question of a girl's vanity," Hamor returned with good-humor; "I forgot that mighty lever in human affairs. Well then, Guenn, I trust you. Take care of it. Take care of yourself."

"One of the most surprising things in the world," he thought, observing her with his young man's wisdom, "is the nervousness of womankind. City or country, they are all alike. This girl now, is morbidly nervous." He wandered off into medical speculations, which always interested him.

"Yes, yes, I'm going," as she sprang towards him, white, speechless, and imploring. "But I don't need an hour to muster my modest reinforcements. I could bring a regiment here in that time. Good-night. You are a very kind-hearted, good girl," he added cordially, "and I wish I knew what would please you."

"Only go!" she gasped.

"I must say I never was so unceremoniously ejected from my own quarters. Good-night. Don't disturb the fire. See to the picture. It's wet, you know. Don't smooch it. And run home as fast as you can. It's dark and late. Then those fellows will be in a pretty rage if they find you here. And Guenn, if any old woman would make a tisane for you, it would n't be a bad idea. That sounds thoughtful, does n't it? The fact is, men are selfish beings, and I don't want you to fail me a day just now. You look feverish. If you should be ill and could n't pose, —" He shook his finger at her warningly.

Another time and her heart would have bounded with joy at so much kindness. Now she came swiftly to him, took his hands, and led him towards the door. She who was always half savage, half timid at a touch. The small, coarse hands, grasping his convulsively, were ice-cold. Hamor yielded to her movement. "She is surely going to be ill," he thought. At the door which she opened, steadily pushing him over the threshold, he said seriously: "Do take a tisane, Guenn. Tell madame at the Voyageurs, I beg her to make you a nice one. You will take it if I wish?" he added, knowing her deep-rooted instinct against any description of medicine.

"Yes, yes, I will take it; I will take anything," she answered hoarsely.

"That's a good child." Putting his arm lightly around her, he stooped and carelessly kissed her cheek. She did not even shrink at his touch, but stood rigid, very near him, with the unspeakable distress on her face. He went whistling down the stairway, and tramped lustily through the court.

"Holy Mother, what a noise he makes!" still listening with painful tension. She heard him swing the gate to with a bang, stride over the pavement beyond, open and close the heavy door under the arch. He was safe for the time. She could breathe now. She closed her eyes and leaned against the door, her hands pressed close against her breast. She felt a strange exhaustion in every limb; but she dared not wait. "I will take the picture down to the woodhouse. No one will see it until I come myself to-morrow, I shall come so early. And as soon as it is safe, I will warn the chief of police. I thought I would not, but it is no use. I must, I must! Shame that Guenn Rodellec must turn against Plouvenec men!"

She crossed the room to the little table by the fire. A book was lying open. She looked wistfully at the strange language he liked to read, and passed her hand tenderly over the page from which he had turned. Then she carefully closed the little volume of sonnets, remembering that he usually closed his books himself. He cared for them. She felt very tired and faint. Kneeling, she laid her cheek against the book, — the cheek he had kissed, against the book his hand had touched.

"But there is no time, no time," she murmured wearily. Her quick ears caught a sound below. Surely there were footsteps! Surely the gate was stealthily opening! They were there, then, already there, and it was too late to save the picture. She bounded to it, and stood by the great canvas, her arms outstretched, her face flashing defiance towards the door, ready to die for his work as she would have died for him. Once more she gazed wildly around.

"O sweet Mother of Christ, is there no way?"

The light? They had already seen it; it was of no use now to blow it out. Suddenly her glance fell on the narrow door which opened upon the empty loft. Her action scarcely slower than her thought, she seized the heavy picture, mindful even then of Hamor's caution not to rub it, and bore it swiftly across the atelier. Would it pass through? Was it too high? She heard footsteps, muffled and slow, on the stairs. There was not an instant to lose. She unlocked and opened the door. The stretcher grazed the doorway, but went through, resting on the beam three feet beyond. Guenn, one foot on the beam, the other on the door-sill, supporting the awkward, heavy canvas, managed to softly close the door just as the door at the opposite end of the long room opened, and the three men entered, saluting the empty studio with loud imprecations.

"If they find me, they will cut the picture in pieces, — and kill him when he comes," thought Guenn in anguish, balancing herself and her charge above fifty feet of darkness. "Wait, there is straw beneath; he sent me for some yesterday for Jeanne's picture. Where was it? Let me think." Her head felt confused in the darkness. "It was on the right side, by the right wall, and I have not turned. If I can move the picture along, if I can drop it straight, so that it will fall all at once and flat, on the wrong side, it will not hurt it; and if it should, he would forgive me if he knew. They won't hear if I do it now, while they are quarrelling. First of all I must take off my sabots and hide them. There must be a place under the door-sill."

So reasoning, with great difficulty, in spite of her unusual strength, she swung the canvas round until it rested lengthwise on the beam; then edged along as best she could, pushing the high stretcher before her. This

beam was her horror by noonday. She could now see absolutely nothing ; but she closed her eyes instinctively, fearing the giddy depths below her, fearing ghastly shapes. Presently the picture would go no further, having struck the sloping roof. Then Guenn, with a prayer to all her saints, dropped it. It did not fall flat and noiselessly as she had anticipated. Owing to some cause, unknown in her philosophy, one corner struck the hard floor. The taut canvas rang like a drum, then fell over softly on the straw.

"If only the wet side is up!" groaned the wretched girl, now on her hands and knees, creeping along the beam. She knew the noise would attract the men. They would find her. "Même chose, if only they don't see the picture. Perhaps they will see nothing, it's so dark." She was crouching at the extreme end now, under the low rafters.

They threw open the door.

"Take care, there's no floor there," called young Nives. The place looked vast and black. The three men, with their keen sailor-eyes, blinked uneasily into the indefinite space.

"I'd like to hang the painter's cursed long body on that beam, alongside of old Morot," muttered Rodellec. "Hoël, just bring that lamp here, will you?"

Nives crossed himself, with an expression of anxiety on his ugly face. "See here, Rodellec, I would n't talk of Morot in that way — at least, not here. He might not like it."

"If he does n't," returned Rodellec, reckless and angry, "he's welcome to show himself and say so."

"Oh, I'll thank you for that till I die," cried Guenn's heart passionately ; "you, even you, — you as you are, as you have always been to me." Tearing her shawl

from her shoulders, her quick brain suggesting that she must conceal her head and as much of her figure as possible, — she clasped her trembling hands convulsively over the beam, and with a supreme prayer to all her saints, dropped and hung above the fifty feet of darkness. “If only I don’t fall on the picture!” she moaned, as her wrists strained cruelly. “O Monsieur Morot’s ghost, don’t be angry, for you see yourself how it is. Our Lady knows I don’t mean anything disrespectful to you!”

Hoël came along with the lamp, which did not produce much effect upon the gloom in the great empty granary. “The noise must have been in the stables after all,” he said. “Now that I think of it, it sounded like hoofs,” — holding the light high, and peering into the most obscure corners. Guenn was in such profound shadow, so nearly on a line with the doorway, that they did not at first perceive her.

Suddenly Nives, with a loud exclamation of horror, pointed towards her. His excited eyes saw a long dark hideous object swaying from the beam. In a moment the three had shut the door between them and the horrible sight, and stood at the extreme end of the room, staring at one another in cowardly uncertainty. Rodellec took the precaution of putting his back against the entrance door.

“Let me go out, Rodellec,” said Hoël. “I tell you, I’ve had enough.”

“It won’t hurt us,” answered Rodellec, his teeth chattering audibly.

“We need n’t be too sure of that,” muttered Nives.

“I never liked this affair. I’ve been drawn into it,” complained Hoël. “I have not anything against the painter. It’s all your fault.”

"I don't mind fighting men," began Nives in his turn. "As for fighting ghosts, I won't. It's unchristian. It's contrary to the Church."

"It's unlucky even to see such things," Hoël said querulously, his eyes fixed upon the other end of the room. "Let me go, I say, Rodellec. It's a bad place. It's a bad job. I want to go home."

"They protect the painter," began Nives. "There's no doubt of it. There's always somebody they protect. They have their likings, like flesh-and-blood people. If they had n't protected him, we'd have had him months ago. No good Breton ought to go on against them. It's no use. It's against the Church. Let's go home, Rodellec."

Rodellec stood with his broad back obstinately against the door. He was himself in abject fear, but his hate for Hamor was stronger still. He walked through the room with a swagger. "Take that," he said viciously, kicking a hole in Hamor's largest charcoal-sketch, "and that," throwing the blue vase on the floor, and flinging the Shakespeare Sonnets into the fire. "Come, come," he said, somewhat relieved by his bluster; "it was a little scare. It has nothing to do with us. We'll pound the painter's head all the same. Mark my words. Old Morot will have nothing to say against that."

Three loud distinct knocks sounded on the other door. The next instant the men were flying breathlessly down the crazy stairway and through the court, never stopping until they reached the orange light.

Guenn, as soon as possible after the door was closed, had climbed up on the beam. Her poor arms felt pulled out of their sockets. Her throat was dry and parched. The blood was rushing furiously to her head. She

dreaded, every instant, that she must fall from sheer weakness. She steadied her head against the rafters, and blew on her fingers to cool their burning. She was small and light, unusually muscular for a girl; but she had supported her own weight with her arms several minutes, and felt physically and mentally exhausted.

"If only he will stay away. If only Monsieur Staunton keeps him. How long is it since he went? How long have I been here?" She could not tell. It seemed, for the pain and fear and misery, that she might have been there hours, weeks, an eternity. She could not hear what the three men were saying, but the murmur of their voices reached her constantly. "I must make them go away; if I die, I must do that. Forgive me, Monsieur Morot's ghost, but I must make them think it is you. Don't be angry. Forgive me; for I have no choice, you see yourself."

She crept along the dangerous beam, reached one foot over to the doorsill, and, summoning her last remaining strength, struck the door vigorously with her sabot three times; upon which the men had ignominiously fled. Guenn, groping, touched the door-knob, and with one last effort, dizzy, faint, trembling with fatigue and over-exertion, but triumphant, fell upon the floor of the abandoned studio.

Meanwhile the three had reached the familiar private room behind the orange light.

"What did you see?" asked Hoël, eager to descant upon the experience, now that he felt safe.

"A damned black body swinging from the beam," answered Rodellec gruffly.

"A blue face with fiery eyes," said Nives.

"I saw bones and a brimstone light, and heard a horrible choking," related Hoël.

The three men crossed themselves. With every repetition, the figure grew more ghastly and gruesome.

"Never do I go there again on any such errand," said Hoël.

"Nor I either," added Nives.

"Then we'll have to catch him somewhere else; for have him I will, before I'm through," and Rodellec swore a mighty oath.

When Hamor returned with Staunton, they found the garret deserted. They sat by the dying fire, and chatted of pleasant things a whole hour.

"I am sorry," Hamor said apologetically. "She really seemed in earnest. I thought, at the time, it was much ado about nothing."

"My dear Hamor, don't excuse yourself that there's no fighting," returned his friend, smiling. "I assure you, I like it better as it is."

"But to drag you from Mrs. Staunton in this way, and frighten her out of her senses into the bargain, for she saw you take your pistol."

"The Goths and Vandals have been here, nevertheless," exclaimed Staunton quickly, discovering the hole in the charcoal-sketch; "and see!" — picking up a fragment of the vase, and finally fishing out of the ashes the charred remains of the Sonnets, and extending them with the tongs towards their owner.

"And tired of waiting, or thirsting for grog, withdrew after these small ravages," Hamor said contemptuously. "Consequently their state of mind could n't have been very serious in the first place. Guenn exaggerated abominably. She really gave me quite a chill. I am ashamed to offer you no better entertainment."

"And I am very glad. Still, I think you'd better

come along now when I go," Staunton said softly. "I don't think Rodellec likes you much, you know, Hamor."

"Oh, a little spite no doubt," Hamor replied carelessly. "It amounts to nothing."

Guenn had not dared to rest many minutes prostrate upon the floor. She knew that she must be at home before her father should come, sullen and suspicious, thrusting a candle before her eyes, sniffing angrily and muttering, to find her seemingly lost in profound sleep.

She went by the shortest path through the fields, but her overwrought body would scarcely support her. Often she thought she must fall by the way. As she came into the house and dropped upon a bench, Nannic sat leaning his elbows on the table, his luminous eyes staring at her. She pulled feebly at her coiffe and apron, knowing that she must hurry, yet feeling half-dazed and incapable of exertion.

"Did you do it well?"

"I don't know," she answered wearily, "whether it was well or ill; but he is safe — the picture too."

"Tell me," he said peremptorily.

She related the bare facts in the simplest way. Her excitement was over. She was almost too tired to be glad.

He listened with close attention; then cross-examined her on some points, a singular expression on his face.

Guenn staggered across the room, and drank a cup of milk. She looked deathly pale, and held on to the furniture as she walked.

"You'd better go to bed," the boy said brusquely.

"I'm going. Nannic, do you know," she began, "I wish you would let me tell monsieur. I wish you'd let me tell him how often you have saved him. I wish you'd let me tell him how you find out everything. I

wish he knew that nobody — nobody is so clever as you, that nobody is so splendid and so good."

"It's enough that he has n't a nice little pistol-ball in his heart, and a big gash across his throat, and a smashed head," returned the boy. "What's the use of telling all you know? It only spoils the fun next time."

She looked at him doubtfully.

"I tell you I enjoy it more this way," he continued impatiently. Then, with bitterness: "You'd better let a fellow, built like me, enjoy what he can his own way."

Guenn sighed deeply. "You know best, Nannic, of course," she said with great gentleness. "Good-night."

"Wait, Guenn," he rejoined abruptly. "See here, — you took up that big picture and squeezed it through that door?"

"Why, yes. I told you, Nannic," — with weary indifference.

"You made them think you were old Morot, swinging on his beam, — you?" with his most sardonic grin, for this was surely his own special domain.

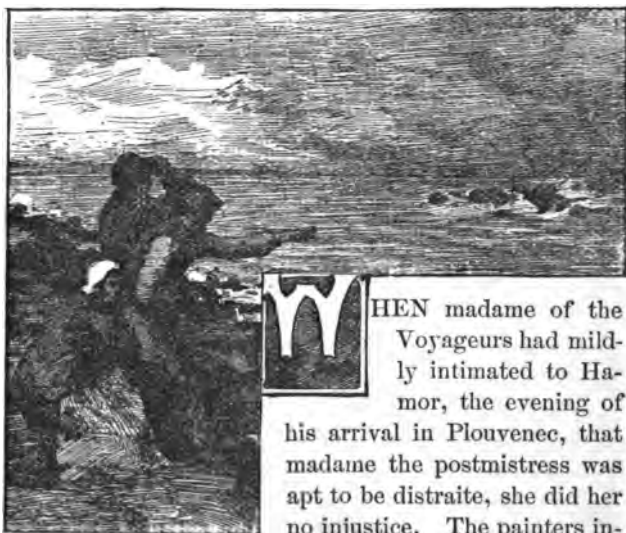
"Yes," she answered wonderingly.

"You hung there by your two wrists, from that high beam, — you?"

"Why yes, Nannic. There was nothing else to do, was there?"

The boy stretched out his long puny arms, and regarded them with unutterable scorn. A spasm of intense longing shot into his pallid face, stormy rebellion of his spirit against the weak, misshapen body which imprisoned it. Then resuming his mask, supporting his head with his crooked hands again, half closing his clever eyes, "It was not bad — for a girl," said the cripple dryly.

CHAPTER XXI.



WHEN madame of the Voyageurs had mildly intimated to Hamor, the evening of his arrival in Plouvenec, that madame the postmistress was apt to be distraite, she did her no injustice. The painters indeed were wont to use stronger

expressions to indicate her peculiarities.

"It's odd how types reproduce themselves," Hamor reflected the first time he saw her. "That gaunt, absent-minded woman has peered over her spectacles at me in Maine, Massachusetts, and California. Now I behold her here. She may speak French as much as she likes," he confided one day to Staunton, "but I verily

believe she is the identical postmistress who said to me once, in a little New England village: 'Here, Mr. Hamor, you've got a long letter from your cousin Elizabeth. As far as I can make out, she and her folks are tol'able smart.' " She was also telegraph-operator, slowly spelling out your dispatches with flattering interest, and looking at you reproachfully if you happened to prefer not to telegraph in French. Her distribution of letters was characterized by such inconceivable irregularity and delay, that the painters at first swore roundly, then remonstrated, then accepted the inevitable with the patience of Mussulmans, — opening letters five days late without a murmur, and stoically enduring whatever blows of fate were dealt them by the Plouvenec post.

But a day came when Hamor refused to be a philosopher. He had put the last touches on the great picture. It was finished. It was dry. It was his masterpiece. He would sit before it silent and absorbed, studying it critically an hour at a time. Finally he began to prepare the box, in which it was to go to Paris to meet its fate.

Guenn watched these last rites with deep excitement. Her heart was tremulous with rich, full memories. It was as if the most of her own life were being nailed up in that great case. Full of sorrow to lose the past, full of joy in his delight that he had finished his best work, she felt that she was bidding farewell to a friend in that familiar canvas. How she loved it, every inch! On such a day, he had begun sketching with great nervous strokes. He was impatient and dissatisfied, she remembered, and no one spoke, feeling his mood. Then it grew clearer in his mind. He made all those *ébauches*. At last he looked up and smiled, and they talked again and were glad. And the days he painted

the fortress, how pleasant those were. How Nannic chanted and sang! And the beautiful week at the islands, the most beautiful week in all her life! She recalled every moment of it,—the lovely fresh mornings, the roll of the breakers, the wind on her cheek, the kindness and laughter, the services in the little chapel, the curé's troubled eyes,—he was so distressed then about poor Jean, the good curé,—the death-bed scene, with Hamor's face in the doorway, and the little hands nestling in her neck, the storm and the shrill wailing of the women. Ah yes, all *that* was in the picture, and more!

Then the quiet days since, when he had worked so long and patiently on some little thing,—her coiffe, her wrist; and she sat so still, so blessed, watching his beautiful face. And that terrible night she thought she should go mad before she could induce him to leave, and she had to drop the precious thing down from that ugly beam. It seemed like sacrilege to her; but he had been so kind the next morning, and never reproached her, although it had fallen on its dear face. He had only smiled and wondered what possessed her to put it in there, when the woodhouse would have been easier. He never quite believed that there had been any danger that night, and she had never liked to tell him how it all was, and explain to him what she had done. Why should she, indeed, since he and the picture were safe? But that night, too, was in the picture,—that night and more!

Ah, if the fine people in the Salon should know all,—know that that Breton girl loves that painting more than her life, and in a boat like that had first sculled him across the ferry, when he had been gentle and kind, and she so rough and hateful she was ashamed to

remember it now! She had grown more decent since, had learned how to help him, — had helped him, thanks to Our Lady and All Saints, in what he loved best! But she was glad they would never know. It was her secret and his. The picture to them would be only a girl sculling with a big oar. They would talk about its color and its drawing, its action, its water, its technique. So much she knew now. She had heard the words often enough. But they would never dream that her whole past was in it, her whole soul, — the best strength of her life, the best thoughts of her brain, the best love of her heart, — since the day it was begun. She gave a violent sob, and burst into tears.

The carpenter had driven the last nail and gone. Hamor was kneeling, addressing the box. He was in high spirits. Even tears could not annoy him to-day. "Don't drown me, Guenn," he said pleasantly.

"I don't mean to be silly," she answered apologetically, smiling at him through her tears. "I feel so strange, monsieur. I should think I was drowning myself. They say you remember then everything you ever did in all your life. That's what I was doing, remembering and remembering. It seems as if somebody was dead in that box."

"If you talk like that, I shall conclude that you like the picture better than the painter," he said with a kind smile. "But I know what you mean. It is a sensation one often has when one comes to the end of anything. I feel more or less so myself." Then, laying down his brush and rising, he said, smiling a little still but speaking seriously: "Guenn, it seems a fitting moment, here over the solemn box, to tell you that I have never thanked you half enough for your help. I have been quite touched by your faithfulness and

patience. I never saw anything like it. Upon my word, you are as loyal as a soldier, as your friend Victor himself."

"O monsieur, O monsieur!" stammered Guenn, radiant under his praise.

"Now I don't intend to make a speech. I only want to tell you simply that you have kept our compact like a man."

"Like a Breton!" suggested Guenn with a ring in her voice, smiling brilliantly, her eyes a little wet.

"Like a Breton, if you will, child; and some day I shall reward you like a — painter!"

"O monsieur, don't speak of reward. I never was so happy. I never half lived until I learned to care for the picture."

"Well, it is just beginning its career. I shall have all its experiences to tell you when I come back from the Salon. So don't mourn as if it were dead, for on the contrary it is just born. I am praying with all my heart that the infant may prove very much alive, and run its course with vigor."

She laughed brightly.

"And Guenn, — I think, since I've concluded to stay here through the summer, I may do something, after all, with that bridal train I spoke of once in the Beùsec churchyard. Your expression suggested it to me just now. Rosy and modest and proud and young," he murmured to himself, "not fierce and defiant as at first," — suddenly studying her as closely as if he had never seen her before. After a pause he resumed lightly, "Why, with all of the girls in your train, Guenn, you would be so proud you would care more for that picture than for this."

"Oh no, monsieur, I shall never love a picture again. I shall never be so proud," she sighed softly.

"Well, well, please yourself; only if you could prepare the bridal costume I should be much obliged. Could n't you go over to Quimper? You know the heavy silver embroideries I like; and if you could find an old jacket, a genuine one, —"

"Indeed I can," she said with alacrity. "I will go over this week with André."

"And, Guenn, I must get at Thymert again. I could finish him without another sitting, but I much prefer one. The good man is wild, like you before I tamed you. He has about as much conception of posing as a Numidian lion."

"Yes, we must have him again," she agreed, nodding seriously. "Oh, he is tame enough for that, monsieur. Only in the winter he was so sad about poor Jean."

"By the way, I've not shown you this, have I?" turning a small picture that stood face towards the wall, and holding it towards her. "I did it yesterday, out of mere caprice."

It was Hervé Rodellec who scowled fiercely at his daughter.

"Oh!" she exclaimed, putting up her hands with a little repelling gesture.

"Good head the man has, interesting study. I've watched him off and on a long time, and have succeeded fairly well, I think, with the sketch."

Guenn said nothing — only stared, and scowled back heartily at the scowling face.

"You are wondering why I want him? Simply because it's a head that amuses me; and you know we don't care for amiability in art. He's the last of the triumvirate I set my heart upon the day I came to Plouvenec. You are the first, girl as you are. I have you all in my clutches." Chattering and smiling, he put the picture back.

"Guenn, I will leave you my keys, so that you can come in and look after these two pictures if it should be necessary. I am going to L'Orient for three or four days. Morot wants me to sail over with him to the regatta. In the mean time, if you can go to Quimper and look up your bridal costume, we can begin our Procession Monday. We'll have Jeanne and Victoria and Léna, — half Plouvenec in fact. Alain as bridegroom, — how would you like Alain as bridegroom, Guenn?" significantly.

"Very much, in a painting," she answered mischievously.

She could never love the new picture as she did the old friend in the box; still she was eager to do her best to serve Hamor's least wish, and the thought of going to Quimper in search of the costume was in itself attractive to her energetic nature. September seemed very far distant. There are so many, many days, she thought, between March and September. Then he had changed his mind in regard to leaving Plouvenec once. Why might he not change it again? She ceased to consider the possibility of existing without him. She lived in the glorious present; and in spite of her strange grief at the loss of the painting, it was a happy Guenn who stood on the quay in the sunshine the next morning, laughing and jesting with the men as each boat set sail for L'Orient. She felt a little odd as young Morot's boat put off, and Hamor waved his hat with a cheery *au revoir*. Plouvenec seemed empty without his smile that day. Still she went brightly to work, and was busy for madame at the inn, and for Monsieur Morot, all Wednesday and Thursday.

Friday she drove over to Quimper on the box with old André, who joked incessantly about her lost locks,

and her supposed infatuation with the handsome Merle sailor. Saturday she was to see Hamor again, — possibly, indeed, that very evening, — she thought with a great heart-throb, as they drove out of Quimper. Three long days since she had seen him! But how he would smile! How beautiful his voice would sound. And he would be pleased with the bridal costume. He would tell her she was a help to him, and a clever girl to choose so well. And when he would see her in it, his face would be like sunshine shining down into her heart. So at dusk — perched on the box of the red and yellow omnibus, jostling against old André, but half hearing his familiar jokes, her happy face turned towards Plouvenec — she was coming to meet her painter.

As the omnibus left Quimper, Morot's boat glided softly up to its landing on the Plouvenec quay. Hamor, with the feeling that he had been absent a long time, walked directly to the Voyageurs and asked for his letters.

"There is a dispatch, monsieur," madame announced. "It came this morning. I was sorry not to be able to forward it, but I did not know whether monsieur was on land or sea."

"Oh, that was quite right," began Hamor, in his politest French. Tearing open the envelope, he instantly relapsed into marrowy English.

"The devil!" he exclaimed, with a frown.

"I hope monsieur has no bad news."

Hamor reflected a moment. "I don't know," he said; "there may be time. Madame, I am sure you are a woman to help a man in an emergency. The emergency is here; I'm the man."

"What does monsieur wish?" said madame calmly.

Hamor looked at his watch. "I want a horse that

can do a four hours' drive in two hours ; I want a driver who is not a fool to take me to catch the night train to Rennes ; I want a few necessary things put into my valise ; I want Mr. Staunton here in five minutes ; and I want some dinner ready as soon as I return from the post-office, where, whether I do or do not find a missing letter, I have every intention of murdering your postmistress."

"Very good," responded madame imperturbably ; "monsieur will find everything to his satisfaction."

Hamor flew out of the house, mechanically muttering the words of the dispatch : —

"Why no answer to Sunday's letter ? R. impatient. Come to-day, or lose everything."

"Give me my letter, madame, if you please," he said sternly, bursting into the postmistress's sanctum.

"Monsieur has no letter. Monsieur mistakes ; monsieur should remain outside, at the window."

"I have a letter which ought to have been delivered last Tuesday. I will trouble you for it. I will remain outside next time. Hamor is the name, — H-A-M-O-R."

"I know perfectly, monsieur," she replied rebukingly ; then slowly examined various piles of envelopes, which lay in their pigeon-holes beneath the letters W, S, and T, — anything but H. Presently she looked twice at an envelope, then scrutinizingly at the young man.

"Give me that one," he said abruptly.

"But it does not belong to monsieur. I have regarded it all the week. It belongs to Monsieur Hammond, who has gone to Nevin, and may return any day. I am keeping it for him."

"Fiend of a disguised Yankee," muttered Hamor. "Let me look at it," he said, controlling his impatience ;

"our foreign handwriting, you know," — reaching out adroitly and snatching the letter.

"Monsieur has reason," she answered plaintively; "the writing so English can well déranger the most —"

But Hamor was gone. It ran hastily to this effect: —

"Your picture tremendous hit. R. insists upon seeing you. Can tell it for you a dozen times, if you like, already. He is here only a few days now; wants you to come on without delay; seems to have a plan in view about Rome. If so, your star is in the ascendant. Congratulations. Telegraph answer, by all means. You know R. simply hates to be kept waiting."

"You see there is no choice," he said to Staunton, who was waiting for him, thrusting the letter into his hand; "go I must. I must ask you to pay any stray bills that may be handed in, and have the two pictures in the atelier packed off to my Paris address. And say good-by to everybody for me, will you, my dear fellow? I don't enjoy leaving in this fashion, upon my word. Let me swallow a mouthful of dinner, as I've had nothing on the boat since breakfast. Ah, there are so many people I would like to see again! Thymert, for one; and, Staunton, do look after Guenn. She's as proud as Lucifer, and will resent my going without a special farewell. But what can I do? I can't wait to hunt her up. If she can be produced suddenly —"

"Did monsieur speak of Guenn Rodellec?" interposed madame's tranquil voice. "She has not returned from Quimper. Does monsieur wish to leave any message or directions to her?"

"Ah! thanks, madame. Tell her I thought of her, and was sorry not to say good-by, and that I'll send her something pretty from Paris, and shall be back some day. Oh, say anything you like that's kind, madame. Explain how it was. You know how."

"I will attend to it," she replied calmly, as if he had ordered roast chicken. "Monsieur's carriage is at the door. It is the best horse in Plouvenec, and the driver is André's brother. Monsieur should be content."

"Madame, you are worth your weight in gold."

"Which would be a handsome fortune," she replied placidly.

Although Hamor had been back but twenty minutes, the news had quickly spread that he was going with André's brother, and the fastest horse in the place, to catch the night train to Rennes. As he came out the familiar door, — giving Staunton his last injunctions, thanking madame, and shaking hands right and left, — it seemed as if nearly every well-known face in Plouvenec was there. The monarchical sippers of absinthe and vermouth rose from their little tables to wish him bon voyage. The judge smiled largely, and would have made a speech if Hamor had not good-humoredly shaken him off. All the hotel people stood on the pavement to see him go. The carpenter, with tears in his eyes, called down St. Hervé's blessing upon him. Meurice's stiff mouth twitched eloquently. Mother Nives and Mother Quaper roared their good wishes in the face of the handsome gars, and little Jeanne sobbed aloud as he bade her good-by. "Tell Guenn how it was. Tell her I thought of her."

"It really touches me," he said to Mrs. Staunton, who stood by the chaise, "this whole-souled kindness, this simplicity of demonstration. I never cared for a place in all my life as I care for Plouvenec. I shall surely come again, surely."

"Like good King Arthur," said the little Danish artist smilingly. "As they say here, 'King Arthur will

surely return.' Everything good must indeed return to Brittany, it is so pleasant here."

"That sounds like Nannic Rodellec. I wish he'd appear. He's always turning up suddenly. Where is the boy?"

The boy lay on his face on the ground, in a shadow of the common, his fingers in his ears. His breast was torn with sobs. He would not see Hamor go. He would not say good-by. His face was pressed to the cold earth, and he wept bitterly.

As Plouvenec seemed to be already fading into a dim perspective, Hamor grew sentimental, and regarded it wistfully. His face wore a charming look of tender retrospection, as the light from the Voyageurs windows shone out for the last time, and the people crowded around to bid him farewell. The spacious, dusky common, the low, frowning battlements, the gleam of water beyond, and the row of lights on the other shore, were already a picture which he beheld lovingly, in the long vistas of memory. Hamor shook hands again with Staunton and his wife. "I'm glad I may see you both at the Salon," he said. "That gives me one pang the less." Turning brightly, "Good-by, madame," he said. "Thanks for everything. I shall certainly come again some day."

"Monsieur will be always welcome at the Voyageurs. The Voyageurs will guard an amiable souvenir of monsieur until he returns." The noble caryatid was upholding her portals, precisely as he had seen her six months before.

"And madame, you who never forget anything, let me leave particularly with you my kindest, most cordial messages for Thymert and Guenn Rodellec. Awkward enough, that the child is not here."

"Very awkward, monsieur," echoed madame calmly. "I must tell her myself," reflected the busy brain, behind the imperturbable forehead. "I must manage Jeanne and the women."

"Time's up, m'sieur," said the driver.

"Upon my word, it's inhuman to be swept off by fate in this fashion," Hamor exclaimed laughingly. "Confound the postmistress and her knavish tricks!"

"Oh, you should n't complain. You are going where glory awaits you," Staunton returned pleasantly.

"There is a certain compensation," Hamor began, but the driver cracked his whip. Off went the old-fashioned Breton chaise. "Be sure and say good-by to Guenn Rodellec," shouted Hamor at the very last.

"Adieu, monsieur," cried the familiar voices; and amid showers of blessings, — invoking Our Lady of the Lannions, St. Hervé, St. Jean de la Roche, St. Anne d'Auray, and a score of benign Breton saints, — from the large group, and a shower of curses from a small group of two on the common, Everett Hamor left Plouvenec.

As the chaise went swiftly over the dark roads, between the granite walls and the fossés, the old omnibus was rolling slowly along towards the village; and just as Hamor stretched himself out comfortably in the coupé he had secured for his exclusive occupancy, Guenn, her bridal finery under her arm, sprang lightly down from the high box, thanked André heartily in her sweet, glad voice, and stamping her feet a little, "to find herself" after the drive, looked around with the rapturous hope that she might hear Hamor's pleasant laugh, or perceive the odor of his cigarette, or even see him sauntering across the common. There were some women at a little distance. She went towards them swiftly.

Mother Nives and Mother Quaper were standing amicably together. They stared at her in silence.

"What a joke," cried Guenn in high spirits. "Has the sky fallen? You two turtle-doves! Deary me, what wonders happen when one makes a voyage to Quimper!" Her pretty laugh rang over the common. Nannic, hearing it, grovelled in the dust. Her irony met with no countercharge.

"Good-night, Guenn," muttered Mother Nives, shuffling off in one direction. "Good-night, Guenn," said Mother Quaper, scuffling off in the other.

"Well, I never!" exclaimed the girl merrily. Surely she had caught a glimpse of Jeanne, coming along. Jeanne must have seen her, but the provoking girl had run off and hidden somewhere. It was a pity, for she would know whether monsieur had come home or not. Still, Guenn did not intend to run after her. "I will go into the Voyageurs. Madame has a head on her shoulders. As for running after Jeanne Ronan, I won't! It is Jeanne's place to run after me." She crossed the common quickly towards the cheerful light of the inn. Under the great oak, not far from the door of the Voyageurs, stood two men. Guenn came suddenly upon them.

"Well," sneered her father, standing directly in her path, "so your painter-chap has sneaked off and left you."

Guenn looked at him with her fearless eyes and laughed. She wore her Sunday gown, her best kerchief and coiffe, the lace with the pretty pattern, and all the finery which she had bought with her hair for the Nevin Pardon. "When one goes to the city on an errand for Monsieur Hamor, one must be fit to be seen," she had reasoned.

"Why should n't he go where he pleases and do what he likes?" she answered lightly, trying to pass.

Rodellec stood in her way, scowling. "Six months here, and I did n't spoil his grin. It's your fault, I suspect, minx!"

"The angels guard him," said Guenn proudly.

"Angels or devils, it's something, sure enough," began Nives. "No fellow ever deserved a good knocking more than he; but you can't fight ghosts, and that's the end of it," crossing himself.

Guenn only laughed.

Rodellec glared at her resentfully. "If I could have borrowed a horse as fast as his, if I'd had my pistol, if there had n't been such a crowd, if I'd known it before, —"

Guenn stood in the full light of the windows, unsuspecting, smiling, tossing her head, patting her great package confidentially, impatient to be off, yet anxious not to show the white feather. The March wind had brought the most vivid color to her cheeks and lips. She never had looked more spirited and beautiful.

Young Nives stared at her and groaned aloud. "He went off like a prince," he snarled, — "the people all bowing and scraping, my lord, the damned painter, leaning out and waving his hand, so gracious and grinnny."

She came with a great bound towards him, and seized his arm roughly. "What's that you say?" she screamed.

"That he is gone, you fool," sneered Rodellec.

"Yes, I know, to the regatta — to L'Orient," she said hoarsely.

"To Paris, — to the devil, to hell-fire and brimstone, if I had my way. But gone he is, gone forever, your long-legged, mealy-mouthed painter."

She staggered as if she would fall ; then rallied, stepped back and faced him superbly, her face white as death. " You lie," she cried fiercely. " You hate him. You are a coward and a murderer. You have lied all your life. You are lying now in your wicked throat."

Madame of the Voyageurs had crossed unnoticed from her door.

" God forgive you, Hervé Rodellec," she said ; " I never will, here or hereafter. Guenn ! " in a voice no one had ever heard from madame.

" Is it true ? " demanded Guenn, seizing her wrists. " You are not a liar."

" Come with me, Guenn ; these men are cruel to you. I must talk with you. Come."

" Is it true ? " Her agonized eyes searched madame's face, and read its fatal answer.

Without a look at one of them, she was gone. Like an arrow she sped through the darkness. Madame, in deepest anxiety, followed her, and saw her take the road to the studio. Arriving a few minutes later, she observed that Guenn had lighted the lamp. Her shadow, as she rapidly paced the long garret, fell on the curtains of the three dormer-windows.

" It is well so," reasoned madame, standing down in the court ; " she will wear herself out in her fierce sorrow. She will grow tired ; and when the tears come she will be safe. She is proud ; she will learn to bear it. But she is better alone, to fight it out herself. Such hearts in pain must be left alone. Poor Guenn ! Poor little Guenn ! "

It was perfectly dark, and no one was there except the one person whom madame trusted. She took out her handkerchief and repeatedly wiped her eyes. Several times that night she stole round to the atelier,

and found the light still burning. "It is well," she thought. "She will grow weary. She will soften there; her memories of the handsome gars will make the tears come."

But Guenn only remained a few minutes in the studio. She had rushed in with the mad hope of finding him. There was his easel, his palette, his camp-stool, as he had left them. Up and down, down and up, she flew, trying to realize what had befallen her. The wind shook the windows. The flame of the lamp streamed up in the sudden gust. Ashes were strewn about the hearth. His chair was pushed carelessly aside. Mechanically she turned down the wick, brushed the hearth, moved the chair back to its place; then started, with a kind of incredulous horror in her face, and paced the room again. There were the two pictures: she turned them with the familiar motion. Thymert, a yearning sorrow in his brave eyes, mourned on the sands by the dead body of a woman. Rodellec's evil glance haunted her with a silent curse. She could not stay where he was! No, no, she must go out into the night, — anywhere, anywhere away from that cruel face. But she must lock the door. Monsieur had said she was to take care of the two pictures, — monsieur, with his laughing eyes and tender voice, and his head thrown back as he smoked, — the beautiful high head she saw always and everywhere. She saw it indeed now, and he was smiling down upon her. "Guenn," he was saying softly, "Guenn."

Gone? Where was he gone? Why was he gone? She had but half heard, half understood. Who said he would never come back? Who knew what he would do? Did he not always tell her first? Who dared to know more than she, — she who had helped him all

these months, while he was making the great picture? He and she loved their picture. But she could not stay here with that evil face, unless the beautiful face was there too, so that she could forget the other. The beautiful face was gone, they said. It was the ugly, sneering lips that had said it. They were moving now and muttering, "Gone forever — forever gone;" and the pitiless eyes sought hers with a mocking stare. "I must go where I can breathe," she gasped, — "out in the night, away from those eyes, anywhere. My head is so hot! I am forgetting something. Ah, it is to lock the door, so that when monsieur comes whistling gayly up the stairway to-morrow morning, he will smile to find all safe." She locked the door and the gate. She put his keys in her pocket. She had touched them with many a furtive caress during the long day at Quimper, proud of his trust, thankful that her hand could rest where his dear hand rested daily. In her keeping were his treasures. She was loyal, like Victor, he had said. To-morrow, when he would take his keys, he would — but no! he was gone, — "gone forever," the cruel mouth had sneered. There would never be any to-morrow. There was only a long yesterday.

Past the lilac-bushes, by the faded-gray house, through the archway where she had waited for him all the frosty winter mornings, down the dim road between the gardens, she blindly rushed. There were dark shapes reaching out towards her over the walls. She made her little *révérance*. "Shapes," she said politely, "I am not afraid of you, if you have no face. I am Guenn Rodellec, who was never afraid. Everybody in Plouvenec knows me." Her voice sounded so strange, she hurried on to get rid of it, the shapes after her. Over

the wall they leaned, crowding against one another ; and, O Holy Mother ! they all had faces, — and always the same evil face, and always saying, “ Gone forever ! ” with a sneer and an oath ! She ran still faster. “ There is something I must find,” she thought. “ I cannot remember, because my head is so hot. Ah, it is the beautiful face. I almost find it, but it turns away.”

She reached the sands. A little gray bird seemed to be fluttering round her head, but when she tried to catch it, it vanished. “ Little gray bird, I know you,” she said gently. “ I love you. You will hide me from the wicked face. You will help me find the beautiful one. I would like to find it, because it smiles all day long, and warms me like the sunshine. It is cold here, only my head is hot. If my head aches I shall not look pretty when I pose for Monsieur Hamor to-morrow. ‘ Remain beautiful for me.’ That is what he said to me that day.”

The winds spoke with a thousand voices. The breakers fell with an incessant moan. “ I hear you all,” she said smiling, and stretching out her arms towards the stormy sea. “ I am not afraid of you. I am only afraid of one face, of one face in all the world. I don’t see it now. The little gray bird is keeping it away. Oh, don’t beg so hard to be buried, poor drowned folk. You make me sad. I would help you if I could. I would lay you all in the churchyard. Oh, I hear you — a soul on every wave, — mothers, children, brothers, sisters, all seeking each other ; and the lovers, — the poor lovers. Did you talk so to Yvonne ? For this is the way she came when her painter went away. I wonder if her poor head was hot. I must cool mine, or I shall not be fresh and pretty for monsieur to-morrow, when he comes home from L’Orient. She

ran across the third beach, poor Yvonne, as I am running now. She was running away from something, running to find something. Why, so am I. What is it I am running from? What is it I am trying to find? I cannot remember, until my head is cool again. Yvonne cut off her pretty hair. Ugh, how cold the scissors felt! It was long brown hair. It reached down to her knees. She wrapped it in paper, and gave it to old André to sell for her in Quimper, because, — are you listening waves? you talk so much yourselves you will never be able to hear me, — because she had no pretty clothes to wear at the Nevin Pardon. And when she danced, and all the world saw, he turned away his face, — he turned away his face, — he turned away his face! Then Yvonne's heart broke, and she threw herself down from this cliff, and her soul is beating on a wave every night against the rocks, just where the sun shines mornings and hurts your eyes, like something I saw once. I forget what, because my head aches. Yvonne! Yvonne!" she cried. "But that was Guenn who danced at Nevin, and saw the great tree-tops behind the little houses, and all the faces looking at her, and one face turned away. Guenn was the prettiest dancer in all Cornouaille; but something broke her heart and she never danced again. Guenn, are you there on a wave? Guenn, answer me! Why, I am Guenn myself!" She laughed loud and long.

Laughing still, she climbed the rocks. It was so droll to forget that she was Guenn. Why, she knew Guenn Rodellec perfectly well. Guenn was the girl who sat knitting in this very place ages ago, and the curé of the Lannions, in his long soutane, looked down kindly on her. She promised him something that day. His dark eyes were strange and sad, because somebody

was drowned on the sand. But no, that was only a picture, — Monsieur Hamor's picture. Nannic was there too, that day. Dear Nannic. She must go home now, for she had been gone all day, buying a bridal dress in Quimper. She must go home and make some crêpes for Nannic; but first she must remember what she had promised the curé of the Lannions.

She sat down in the familiar place, her burning head in her hands. The waves were calling her always. She heard Yvonne's voice distinctly: "Guenn, — come, Guenn." It would be easy, and the cool foam would ease the pain in her head. But first she must remember what she had promised Thymert. It was a pity his good kind eyes were sad. He had stood there, she sat here. Ah yes, these were the words: "If ever I need help, I will come to you, as surely as the winds and waves come to the Lannions." She had given him an honest hand-clasp. "It's a good Breton promise," she had said.

"Come, Guenn!" called Yvonne.

"I cannot come. I must keep my promise. All Plouvenec knows Guenn Rodellec never broke her word," she cried with the old pride. "The recteur and I are Bretons."

"Help? Yes, I need help. I cannot quite remember why. But the recteur will tell me. He carried me in his arms when I was a little thing. He has been good to me all my life. I promised to come to him if ever I should feel alone, if ever I should not know where to go or what to do. Ah yes, I do feel unhappy, I don't know why. I cannot think why I cry so hard; but I am unhappy indeed, and alone, and I know no one here except poor Yvonne. All the other voices are strange. 'If anything should happen,' the good curé

said that day. Jeanne and Nannic were laughing on the rocks; Meurice's boat was coming in, all sails spread. It looked like a storm. Well, what happened? Why am I sobbing? What must I find? Thymert will tell me, and he will see that I keep my word. Yvonne, I am sad, — sad as death when I think of you. It is a pity he turned away his face. And your soul on a wave beating against the cliff!"

Down the rocks she sprang, hearing always the innumerable voices of the souls on the waves, calling each other, calling her, in infinite unrest. "I cannot come. I must keep my promise. Why do you call me so?" she asked reproachfully. "You are Bretons yourselves."

On she flew over the three beaches, drenched with the spray of the thundering March breakers, past the few late lights of the sleeping village, and round the dusky Point where she had stood scores of times to wait for the incoming boats. She ran swiftly along the quay, found Meurice's boat, loosened it from its moorings, — the great boat manned usually by three sailors and the mousse, — set full sail, and put off. "My head will feel cooler by the time I reach the Lannions. Ah! there is the little gray bird on the mainmast. Good! Then I shall not see the wicked, cruel face." She shuddered. "Gone forever? What is gone forever? Never mind. Thymert will tell me; Thymert will know. Not another girl in all Plouvenec can sail this boat alone; but I am strong. Everybody says Guenn Rodellec is the strongest girl in Plouvenec. And Meurice's boat indeed knows the way of itself to the Lannions. It used to take me over often enough to monsieur, those beautiful mornings. Ah, yes! monsieur is waiting and smiling on the rocks. He never once

turned away his face on the Lannions. He will look at me again. If he would look at me just once, the pain in my head would stop. And monsieur le recteur knows that I will keep my promise, my good Breton promise. 'It's a promise?' said he. 'It's a promise,' said I. Meurice's boat was coming in, and it looked like a storm."

"Ah, mon dieu, que la vie est amère."

The sweet careless song floated on the gale as Meurice's boat ran wildly before the storm, out on the dark, tumultuous, open bay. "Meurice himself never ran her along like this! Faster, faster!" she cried, clapping her hands and laughing. "To the Lannions! There he will not turn away his face. There, I shall come as surely as the winds and waves. That was my good Breton promise. Faster! To the Lannions! To Thymert!"

At dawn the next morning Thymert stood at his chapel door. The storm had been severe. He feared bad news of his fisher-folk. Two good boats were out, and his best men. The wind had gone down, the sea was quieter, but sullen and menacing still. He shaded his anxious, loving eyes with his hand, and looked far over the water in every direction; then closely at the Lannions with kindly scrutiny, hoping no chimney was down, no cottage unroofed. Last of all he scanned his own little island.

What was that by the great rock? Something red, something white,—something outstretched on the sands. He went striding towards it, seized with a nameless terror.

"O my God!" he moaned, and knelt by the little figure. It lay face down; but Thymert did not need

to turn it, to know who had come, as surely as the winds and waves, to the Lannions. He lifted her in his arms, his face fierce and set, and carried her through the chapel porch and laid her on his own bed. He had her now alone. There was no one to stand between them. No one should come near her. There she lay, maidenly and beautiful. He bolted every door. His people sought their priest in vain. All day long the strong man knelt by the dead child, alone with her, with his agony, his conscience, and his God.

Towards evening he rose, and signalled old Brigitte. When she arrived and saw his face she screamed. "Hush," he said, "come here and take care of this little drowned girl. Watch by her until I can send you help."

"Holy Mother, but it is Guenn!"

The lovely eyes were closed; the mobile, spirited face was at last quiet; the sweet wild laughter was hushed forever; the busy little hands were crossed tranquilly now over the red kerchief; the loyal, generous heart had ceased to beat.

"So meek, so still, one would not know the little witch," sobbed old Brigitte.

The curé leaned over the still, pure face, his anguish smouldering in his deep eyes. He stretched his hands yearningly over her beloved head. Not once had he touched her, except to close her eyes, lay her hands on her breast, and straighten the folds of her gown. Now his prayer, his benediction, and his farewell were silent, as was his sorrow. He turned and left her, — with her, all the joy of his life.

He set sail alone for Plouvenec. Looking neither to the right nor the left, he passed the astonished sailors on the quay, walked straight to the inn, and spoke me-

chanically, his face ashy-pale, a few brief words with madame. That same night he drove to Quimper, and was closeted many hours with his venerable and sorely perplexed bishop.

Plouvenec never saw his glowing ardent face again, never again welcomed the old threadbare soutane swinging along its streets, never felt the beautiful warmth of his smile, the strength of his presence. Never again did his tender, brown eyes rest upon his rude island chapel, his fisher-folk, his Lannions.

After Guenn was gone little Jeanne was like a bird mourning for its mate. She pined, and would not be comforted. By the river, while the others talked, she would only bend lower over the water, and sob and weep in a wailing, hopeless way. At the usine it was even worse, she thought. One grew so tired without Guenn's jokes and drolleries. Jeanne was in fact tired many months. Madame at the Voyageurs seemed to know best what to do with her. Madame did not chatter like the others.

"When you are different, something always happens. Guenn was different," Jeanne would say drearily; and madame would answer, with a soft look in her eyes: "That is true, Jeanne. She was different, God knows."

Jeanne married young because it was expedient, and grew old and wrinkled fast, and toiled unceasingly; and sent her brave boys to sea, to lose them, and mourn for them nights when winds and waves were high. She lived the laborious, patient life which Guenn had regarded as the bitterest fate. Jeanne bore it gently, as it was her nature to bear everything, until her gentleness settled into permanent stolidity, and her days

became a mechanical round of leaden cares, reaching into loveless, forlorn old age.

As for madame, she had her house to fill and satisfy ; but in some way the young girls of Plouvenec grew freer with her, and came to her for advice about ribbons and the most trifling things. However full the Voyageurs might be, madame never seemed too busy to look carefully in a girl's face, note its shy blush, and hear what she had to say. When an artist, arriving from Paris, was old, and quite unconscious of the pretty waitresses, she rejoiced. To a charming exterior she was apt to remain singularly undemonstrative. "Why should our girls suffer needlessly?" she would demand of the only person honored by her entire confidence. "Life is up-hill work, at best. Why must the strangers have everything their own way? Did I make a mistake with that poor child? Could I have helped her more?"

Rodellec mourned conspicuously, and fairly revelled in the luxury of woe. He received the sympathy of many good and unimaginative souls ; and in his maudlin moments his angel-children and his angel-wife formed a convenient group in the background, against which he arranged his suffering and picturesque personality in prominent relief. Active on his boat, unsurpassed in his exploits beneath the glare of the orange light, he remained hale and hearty and fair of skin, many long years. Restful sleep blessed his nights, never disturbed but by an excess of grog ; a good appetite solaced his days. His life was replete with the so-called rewards of virtuous living. If ever among the group of girls singing blithely on the common, evenings, a voice had an innocent, irrepressible, mirthful ring like Guenn's, if ever a little figure, with large brilliant eyes, a lovely face, and a red kerchief neatly pinned, flitted across

his path, he would cross himself piously, wipe his eyes, and ejaculate appropriately, "My angel-child!" Rodellec was not of the stuff of which suffering is made.

Nannic sickened and died. It was perhaps the cleverest thing the boy could do, but Nannic was always clever. He had never had much strength, he had felt all winter more tired than usual; and his hold upon life was so feeble that he simply did not know how to live without Guenn,—bright, strong Guenn, who only smiled radiantly when he mocked and teased her; beautiful Guenn, rosy as a peach, fresh as a dew-drop, who sang and danced and laughed and worked, and was always where she was needed. He did not suffer much, but only wasted away, and the women of the village were good to him. Jeanne's mother took him home at the wise suggestion of madame at the Voyageurs. Nannic was quiet and grateful at the last, but obstinately refused to see his father, and nearly went into convulsions when people — of the species that persist in judging family relationships by the conventional idea of what they ought to be, rather than by the bitter truth of what they are, — piously pleaded his father's cause with him, and begged to introduce the penitent Rodellec, as a warning and edifying example by his son's death-bed.

"Sobs and gurgles are cheap," sneered Nannic. "Father or no father, don't talk to me! Bring him along, and I'll turn my face to the wall. He killed her. He has killed us all. I hate him. And if you want to know the truth, I have hated him all my life."

Then often he would murmur, his large blue eyes upturned, "I saw it all coming. I told him, I told her. The other one was not to blame. I always knew it would be so," he persisted to the last. "It had to be so. The other one came and went and did not know." The

women repeated his sayings with awe, and added them to their store of ghost stories, miracles, prophecies, and magic. So Nannic won the honors he had most desired during his puny existence, and passed away, if not in an odor of sanctity, in what he at least esteemed far higher, a mystic and supernatural atmosphere.

Even Guenn's impetuous heart, the loyal heart that beat so passionately for her people, — the warm heart with all its exactions, ambitions, small vanities, and great loves, — would have been satisfied, could she have heard the women by the river. How the young ones wept and mourned ; how old Mother Nives, with a queer break in her angry voice, called out : " Hush up, fools ! She was worth the whole pack of you. Who will give a body a merry word now ? Who has dancing eyes, that make one laugh and forget the ache in one's bones ? Who of you is worth talking to ? " scowling fiercely. " Hush up, I say ! "

To which Mother Quaper responded gutturally, through volcanic sobs : " Who indeed, Madame Nives ? But it's late in the day for you to find it out. I was always her friend, and she knew it. "

Battle royal ensued, long-continued, hot, and reaching over wide fields ; but it would have pleased Guenn, for it was in her honor. And honest tears flowed fast, and praises of her cleverness, brightness, and beauty sounded many days by the river. Even the stolid girls, the ugly and jealous girls, found something kind to say, some remembered word or famous deed of Guenn Rodellec to recount ; for thus we treat those whom we can harm no more, and where the angel of death spreads his majestic wings, envy withdraws its poisonous breath and repudiates its own malignity. Guenn was then not forgotten, but passed gloriously into the village annals.

When, in the busiest sardine-season, a girl was praised for a clever bargain, a saucy laughing answer, or for rapid work in the usine, the grimy fish-wives and rough sailors would shake their heads and say, "Ah, that's nothing to Guenn Rodellec!" When at a Pardon a young girl, flushed and brilliant, came forward to receive the prize for dancing, and blushed still deeper under her lover's ardent gaze, until the mounting color reached her modest coiffe, the young men would exclaim: "Ah, but you should have seen Guenn Rodellec, with cheeks as pink as apple-buds, and feet as light as the crest of a wave."

So Guenn's imperious vitality seemed to fill its rightful place long after she was gone; and when the people spoke of her, the vivid little figure, with its sinuous grace and daring, seemed again to be flashing through the village, with a friendly call to the sailors on the dune, a bold retort flung to any one who dared provoke it, a sweet audacious voice singing ever, at work and at play, the mutinous blue eyes, with their vast indulgence for Plouvenec, their haughty stare for the insignificant world beyond.

Ten years later, Hamor happened to be passing a winter in Rome. Time had treated him gently and generously, softening some angles of face and figure, yet leaving him still with the charm of his boyish happy grace, and the golden gleams in his blond hair and beard. Distinguished in his art, steadily advancing, his aspiration boundless, with a judicious number of friends and sufficient wealth to meet his requirements, Hamor was a fortunate man.

He had not as yet married. Frequently he had had occasion to commune with himself upon this vital sub-

ject, for he was a favorite with women, and still inclined to make psychological studies of particularly charming girls. There was always some one in whom he was interesting himself more or less sentimentally, during those hours in which he was prevented from working by the unavoidable recurrence of evening, the necessity of dining, or some other imperative fact. But he laughingly acknowledged that no woman could be more to him than the charming flower of a day. He would say to his married friends: "The most of you, you know, give your wives more or less divided homage at best. I should give mine none at all. After the novelty of daring to belong to such a wonderful creature had ceased to surprise me, I should forget her. I should go off to Egypt without saying good-by. I should do the most outrageous things, upon my word. No! while I'm an honest man I shall keep clear of matrimony. I admit I have my passing temptations, like other men. But I assure you, when I begin a new painting I am not aware that the tender passion exists. Now don't jeer; it's a fact. Something may be wanting in my composition, but I positively do forget that there's such a thing as a kiss in the universe; and what is more,—you others may reason and act as you will,—I'm a better painter when I forget it. The kind of wife I, in my weaker moments, sigh for, is much too good to become a victim to my obliviousness,—and much too pretty," he would conclude, the tender smiling look which he always had for women and children creeping over his face, touched with varied and mellow reminiscence; and his friends in a unanimous chorus pronounced him: "An odd fellow, but an excellent fellow for all that. Hamor's heart is in the right place."

From his early childhood, when his gentle voice and

winning smile had won from calloused maiden aunts the cakes denied to less comely nephews, his indulgent family and the world at large had imputed to him an incalculable amount of heart. A good reputation, like a bad one, following a man with an assiduous want of reason, few people mentioned Hamor's name without, in one breath, alluding to his heart; so that that organ, faultless at least in its functions, had become finally as famous as his paintings.

Coming rapidly from a friend's studio in the Via San Basilio one morning, he passed a group of Carmelite monks. Intent upon his own thoughts, eager to return to an absorbing work, he had already passed the mournful band, when he was irresistibly forced to stop and follow them with his eye. His trained glance, in spite of his preoccupation, had noted the leading figure, and discovered a resemblance which mystified him.

"Where have I seen that man? Under what other conditions? Ah, I have it. Bretagne, — Les Lannions, — Thymert himself! No other priest on earth ever carried that magnificent pair of shoulders, and walked with that sailor gait."

He overtook the group, reached the leader, and cried, his pleasant voice ringing with remembrance and welcome, "Is it you, monsieur le curé, — you yourself?" extending both hands cordially.

The man started, shrank back, looked wildly around as if seeking escape; then, with the patience of utter hopelessness, resigned himself. "This too will pass away," warned the new discipline, smothering the hot leaping fires of his old nature.

Was this indeed Thymert? The rich brown, with which the sea-winds had tinged his face in the old free life, was changed to an ashen pallor. The warmth of

his dark eyes, that had glanced in loving protection upon his barren islands, his fishermen, his Brittany, was forever gone. Impenetrable gloom had settled beneath his sad brows, and around the once generous and unsuspecting mouth were stern and sorrowful lines.

"It is as if the spirit of youth in the man had been suddenly killed, as if he bore in his heart the remembrance of one fatal moment," thought Hamor, — shocked as a man, finely analytical as an artist. He was still holding his hat in his hand. The sunshine fell on his fair hair and happy, cordial face. "Monsieur le recteur, it gives me the greatest pleasure to see you again. You have not quite forgotten me, I hope?"

"I have not forgotten you, monsieur."

Hamor went on genially, wondering much, but not disturbed by the priest's lifeless manner. "I assure you, I have never forgotten you, or anybody else in Plouvenec. Happy days, those. How often have I longed to run up to Bretagne and see all the old friends. But you know what life is, — never long enough for our plans."

"Long enough," repeated the priest — without interest, without assent, without denial.

"Great heavens, a voice from the catacombs," Hamor commented mentally; yet not disconcerted, continued in his friendly way: "And you are actually living in Rome? Who would have anticipated that, in the old days?"

"I am living in Rome," Thymert's dead voice replied.

Even with Hamor's proverbial amiability, it was difficult to prolong a conversation met by this wall of unresponsiveness.

"I should like much to talk with you, when you are

at liberty," Hamor began again easily. "I remember my Breton days so well. They are among my most dear reminiscences."

"I have no time," said the pale priest, his cavernous eyes never turning from the painter's kindly solicitous face.

"Ah? Then I must seize the happy moment, and ask you now, while I have you, how everybody is. First of all, Guenn, of course. Is she married? Is she happy? Has she half a dozen babies, sun-browned, rosy, and beautiful like herself?" He saw them in fancy, the sturdy pretty little things, and began to smile on them genially.

Thymert's face looked as if it were carven in granite. "Guenn is dead, monsieur."

"No! Poor little Guenn! Poor lovely little Guenn! It grieves me to hear that, upon my word. One really can't associate the idea of death with Guenn Rodellec. It always seemed to me she would live forever. Upon my word, you have given me quite a shock, — after these years too, — but I was always fond of her. When did it happen, monsieur le recteur? You will surely tell me that," he said gently.

"Ten years ago," replied the hollow voice.

"What! The very year I left Plouvenec?"

"The year you left Plouvenec, monsieur."

"And how?" Hamor asked softly.

"Drowned, monsieur."

"Ah," slowly, "an accident. Poor dear pretty little Guenn! All her lightness and brightness gone! I have often thought of her since, I assure you. I have never found a model so altogether beautiful, so fresh and free and charming. I owe her much. You remember that my picture of her brought me a medal of

honor? That was the true beginning of my good fortune. I sent her some pretty things from Paris, just after I left Brittany. I selected them carefully. It amused my friends; but I wanted her to know I had not forgotten her."

The dark priest made a strange, deprecating, unintelligible gesture; then stood motionless and silent before the sunny-faced artist.

"Well," reflected Hamor, "all I have to say is, if Rome has done it, Rome has much to answer for. This man was the most superb creature I ever saw, the most gloriously alive. Now he is lost to humanity, — dead, petrified."

Gazing kindly into the inscrutable depths of Thymert's eyes, the painter said, with his fine musical intonation: "I will not detain you, monsieur le curé. I see that you are preoccupied. May I beg you to keep this card, in case you should ever care to talk with me? For me, it would always be a peculiar pleasure to see you. I shall always retain the strongest and most grateful remembrance of you, and of the old Breton days."

"Adieu, monsieur," rejoined the hollow voice; and Thymert turned away. Erect and strong he passed down the narrow Roman street, his powerful swinging shoulders as remarkable in the great city as when, ten years before, Hamor had first seen him in his old soutane, towering above the rough fisher-folk of his native land. Then he was king among his people, by force of his rich magnetism, and the warmth of his noble and passionate heart. Now he bore on his face the majesty of unutterable pain.

Hamor was unfeignedly grieved. "If I did not know the simple goodness of the man, I should say that not

sorrow alone, but crime, had frozen him into this ghost of his former self."

The sombre priest returned to his ascetic duties, his penances, his prayers; the happy painter, to his art. Each man went his way.







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